



'DEMON' STAB MAN LOCKED UP

Report by John Scott

A PARANOID schizophrenic who believed he was possessed by a demon when launching a ferocious knife attack has been sentenced to indefinite detention in a secure psychiatric hospital.

Tommy Smith can only be freed on the orders of the Home Secretary if, and when, doctors are satisfied that the 18-year-old's mental issues have been resolved.

The teenager's mental health disintegrated after alcohol and drug abuse, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

He was released from Werrington Young Offenders Institution in Stoke on home detention and curfew in January last year after being locked up for two knife-point robberies.

The following month Smith, then living in Grove Street, Dudley, stabbed 66-year-old Peter Churm at least ten times in the victim's driveway at nearby Owen Street.

Mr Churm was stabbed in the chest, side, head, neck and forearm. One of the victim's ears was split while the other had the lobe almost completely severed.

The attack was carried out with such force that Smith's eight-inch knife broke in two.

Onslaught

Smith, who was short of money, launched the onslaught after Mr Churm refused to hand over the keys to his son's Range Rover on February 24 last year.

The defendant later told forensic psychiatrist Dr Jon Kennedy that he started suffering from hallucinations three weeks before the stabbing. Smith also claimed that at the time of the attack he was possessed by a demon.

It was accepted by the defence that Smith was the knifeman but he denied all charges claiming he did not know what he was doing. He was acquitted of attempted murder but convicted of grievous bodily harm and burglary by the jury at a trial earlier this year.

Judge Amjad Nawaz ruled: "This young man is not only a danger to himself but those around him."

The judge imposed a hospital order with an added restriction that means the approval of the Home Secretary will be required for Smith to be set free, if doctors have decided he is safe to release. Smith will be held at Ashworth high security psychiatric hospital in Merseyside.

Following the hearing, Mr Churm's family said the attack had left him physically and mentally scarred.

It said: "Peter Churm is a husband, father and grandfather. The violent action of Tommy Smith has wrought havoc upon us all. The attack has changed the way we view our lives. We are a family still attempting to come to terms with such savagery."

LUCKY ESCAPE FOR COUPLE AS CAR HITS GARAGE



The owners of this Cradley Heath home were standing just feet away in the kitchen when a neighbour's car ploughed into their garage

A COUPLE in Cradley Heath had a lucky escape when a car ploughed through their garage — while they were both feet away in the kitchen.

George and Margaret Palmer were preparing lunch when they heard the Mercedes hit the front of their home in Cradley Heath.

The driver of the car, next-door neighbour Debbie Kaur, suffered a blackout as she pulled on her drive after going shopping.

The car smashed through the brickwork of the Palmers' garage, which contained the retired couple's fridge and freezer.

Mrs Kaur was taken to Russells Hall Hospital, where she was treated for minor injuries and shock, following the incident on Saturday morning.

Mrs Palmer, aged 67, said: "Me and my husband were out in the kitchen in the back and we heard an almighty bang. We ran outside to find Debbie in the car."

"It was a huge shock and our first concern was Debbie. Then we realised how lucky we were that no-one was in the garage."

She added: "Debbie was pulling in the drive from doing her shopping, that was the last

thing she could remember. She woke up to find her car in the garage."

Mr Palmer, 66, said: "We were both in shock when we found out what happened."

Fire crews, police and paramedics were called to the scene in Maypole Close at 11.30am.

Mrs Kaur was removed from her vehicle by fire crews who used cutting equipment to remove the side of the vehicle.

Following the crash, Watch Commander Matt Beckerleg, of Haden Cross Fire Station, said the couple had been lucky to avoid injury.

ANTIQUE

Family's shock at the £1m doorstep

THE owners of a vase used as a doorstep at a home in the Black Country have been shocked to discover the rare item could sell for up to £1 million at auction.

The family, who wish to remain anonymous, inherited the vase from their Great Aunt Flossie, who lived in Cornwall in the 1920s. It is now believed to be a rare Chinese vase dating from the 18th century.

They had used the vase as a doorstep when a grandchild was running around the house. It was valued by Hansons Auctioneers & Valuers and it is up for sale on July 1 at Hansons' Derbyshire auction room.

EVENT

Armed Forces Day celebrations at hall

A REMINDER has been issued that one of the biggest day's in the Dudley borough calendar is fast approaching.

Armed Forces Day takes place at Hinley Hall and Park on Sunday from 11am to 5pm to celebrate the work of servicemen and women.

Dudley Council is gearing up for a packed day of family entertainment and formal military performances at the free admission event, which will also mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

ROADS

Stop and go signs during resurfacing

MOTORISTS have been warned to expect delays on a busy route in the Black Country for the rest of this week.

Traffic will be directed by stop and go signals on Hayes Lane, Lye, in Stourbridge until tomorrow (Friday).

Workers will be resurfacing the carriage-way, which joins a T-junction connecting to the busy A458 running between Stourbridge and Halesowen.

The work, not far from the Lye By-pass and opposite Bald's Lane, will take place outside of peak times but motorists have been warned delays will be likely during other periods of the day.

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CELEBRITIES FLY THE FLAG



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EDITORIAL:
Tel: 01384 353201/01384 353205
E-mail: dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

SPORTS:
Tel: 01902 319453
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PROPERTY: Marguerita Finnegan
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MOTORING: Liz Barratt
Tel: 01384 353244
E-mail: liz.barratt@expressandstar.co.uk

CLASSIFIED:
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DISTRIBUTION: Paul Jones
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He always tackles the hot topics head-on

Spencer brands documentary 'deceitful'

A FORMER chief suspect has branded a documentary into the 1978 murder of Stourbridge paper boy Carl Bridgewater as 'deceitful'.

Bert Spencer, who has always denied killing the 13-year-old, criticised criminologist Professor David Wilson and the Channel 4 documentary for rehashing old allegations as new revelations.

Professor Wilson carried out a series of interviews with 76-year-old Spencer for 'Interview With A Murderer', which aired earlier this month. The criminologist spent more than 20 hours in Spencer's company.

Revelations in the programme prompted Dudley North MP Ian Austin to calls for the police investigation to be reopened. The shooting at Yew Tree Farm shocked the nation 38 years ago.

Last week Spencer said he 'categorically denies' the allegations after his ex-wife Janet, speaking publicly for the first time in the documentary, seemed to cast doubt on his alibi.

He said he 'had no involvement in this heinous crime' and any suggestion otherwise was 'hearsay and invention'. He described the programme as 'deceitful and accused Professor Wilson of being two-faced.

Spencer said he did not regret taking part in the documentary and claimed had been 'inundated' with supportive comments.

He said: "I do not run, I do not hide. I never will, no matter how difficult times like this become. I didn't have to take part in the documentary but had to so to put an end to these scurrilous allegations I've had to live with for almost half of my life.

A Channel 4 spokesman said: "Bert Spencer approached Professor Wilson via his biographer and asked him to interview him and challenge him. Spencer willingly agreed for these interviews to be filmed. We could not have foreseen the startling new revelations which have unfolded in the making of this film."

Professor Wilson declined to comment.

Man cleared on charge of attempted murder

A JURY has found a Dudley man accused of pushing his former girlfriend from a third storey window not guilty of attempted murder.

Marlon Bills, aged 44, stood trial at Birmingham Crown Court after Lisa Turner, also 44, fell from the window in Himley Road, Dudley, on December 10, last year.

Miss Turner was found on the ground outside a block of flats in a critical condition having sustained a spinal injury and broken ankle.

Bills was also accused of resisting police arrest.

The court had heard that when police arrived at the scene Bills was arrested inside his flat, during which he was found to be in possession of a knife and was Tasered by officers.

Royal Mail worker held on to Christmas post

A POSTAL worker for Royal Mail stored more than 1,200 items of post in his flat over the Christmas and New Year period, a court heard.

Jordan Priest, aged 24, of Braemar Close, Sedgley, was discovered keeping the packets at his home, Dudley Magistrates Court heard.

Priest pleaded guilty to two charges of being engaged in the business of a postal operator when he delayed or opened a post packet.

The first charge related to 1,225 parcels between December 15 and January 11 this year. The second was for 64 packets 'on or about' January 26.

During Monday's hearing, Mr Sam Coe, prosecuting, said: "Mr Priest works in postal operation and does not deliver post. "It started in January of this year when a phone call said post had been recovered from a block of flats and it was Mr Priest's address and postal area."

Distress

Mr Andrew Brocklehurst, defending, said that Priest, who has no previous convictions, has been fully co-operating with Royal Mail.

He added: "This incident comes after he was in a very stressful situation and his partner's grandmother died of cancer on Boxing Day.

"He understands that it was a huge amount of mail over the Christmas period that caused a lot of distress to people."

Priest was granted unconditional bail to appear before Wolverhampton Magistrates Court on Monday, July 4.

Royal Mail brought the prosecution against Priest. A spokesman said he no longer worked for the Royal Mail, adding: "Royal Mail has a zero tolerance approach to any dishonesty and the safety and security of mail is of the utmost importance to this business.

"It is a criminal offence to tamper with or delay the delivery of mail and anyone caught doing so will face serious disciplinary measures."

He added: "Royal Mail will always seek to prosecute the tiny minority of people who abuse their position of trust."

Albion's oldest fan dies aged 108



Lifelong West Bromwich Albion Fan Jack Jones met Albion legend Tony 'Bomber' Brown at the Hawthorns last year

A BAGGIES superfan who was born just 30 years after the club was founded has died aged 108.

Tributes have been paid to Albion supporter Jack Jones, who lived through the reign of five monarchs.

Believed to be the oldest person in the Midlands, Jack was described as 'Albion through and through' by Baggies legend Tony 'Bomber' Brown.

Born in Enville on February 12, 1908, Jack attended his first Albion match at the age of 12. Jack was a guest of honour at The Hawthorns in February last year when he celebrated his 107th birthday by watching his beloved Baggies beat Southampton 1-0.

In the Second World War Jack helped build Spitfires and later worked as a lorry driver. He married married Winifred in 1939 and was widowed in 1989.

His final visit to The Hawthorns included a meeting with one of his heroes, Tony 'Bomber' Brown.

He was also presented with a personalised shirt - Jack 107 - and a signed match ball by captain Darren Fletcher.

Nischa Pritchard, care manager at Tudor Manor Care Home in Stourbridge, where Jack had lived since 2013, said: "Jack always enjoyed talking about his memories supporting the Albion."

Tony Brown said: "He was a delightful man, a great man and tremendous character who was Albion through and through."

Event aiming to help Leah get on

A CHARITY fundraising night is being held to help a little girl from Cradley Heath walk unaided.

Harj of Harji Bhaji's bar and lounge - formerly the Royal Oak - in Dudley Road, Rowley Regis, was so touched when she heard about the £35,000 appeal to pay for an operation for six-year-old Leah Davy that she set about organising special fundraising events.

Leah was born with spastic diplegia, leaving her unable to put her feet flat to the floor because muscles in her legs are too tight.

Harj said: "We raised more than £2,000 but there is still a shortfall of £6,000 so we want to do the best we can for Leah."

Tickets cost £10 for the event on Saturday. Call Harj on 07773 3475967.

Man cleared on charge of attempted murder

Decision is due on apartments plan

A PLAN to build 14 apartments in three blocks at the junction of Thorns Road and Caledonia, Quarry Bank, is being recommended for approval by Dudley Council's planning committee on Monday. The development is for one, two and three-bedroom apartments.

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Now learning centre is hit by invasion of caravans

TRAVELLERS have moved onto their caravans onto the car park of a Dudley community centre — just days after a group was moved on from a nearby park.

Around 20 caravans set up on the car park of the Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre and Library Link community centre on Friday evening.

Ward councillor Bryan Cotterill said he had spoken to management at the centre.

Councillor Cotterill said: "I was informed on Friday that around 20 caravans had set up camp on the car park of the Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

"I don't know where they have come from. Travellers seem to be everywhere in Dudley at the moment.

"I will be speaking with our legal representatives at the council to see if we can get them moved along as quickly as possible.

"Having spoken to management, they are going to have to play it by ear on whether they want to call off the youth club meeting."

Travellers were moved on from Priory Park in Dudley on Thursday, while camps were also recently set up on Woodside Park and Hurst Green Park in Halesowen.

The camp is the latest in a variety of cases in Dudley this year. Earlier this year camped on the cinema car park at the bottom of Castle Hill and caravans also moved onto the car park at Dudley Leisure Centre.

Four arrests over theme park attack

FOUR teenagers have been arrested on suspicion of assault after 15-year-old from Dudley was injured at Alton Towers.

Staffordshire Police said it was questioning a 13-year-old well as a 14-year-old and two 15-year-olds, after the incident at Alton Towers on Thursday.

The force said the four boys in custody are all from Liverpool and were arrested after site security staff called the police shortly after 4pm.

A 15-year-old boy from Dudley had to be airlifted to the Royal Derby Hospital after suffering facial injuries.

His condition is described as stable.

The force has appealed for witnesses to contact police on 101, or call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Homes proposed next to farm site

NINE new homes are proposed for a site next to a farm in Stourbridge, under new plans.

An application for the homes to the rear of Old Farm, County Lane, has been lodged with Dudley Council.

Peak performance to boost charities



Ian Austin MP, centre, and Mayor of Dudley Councillor Mohammed Hanif with the Ben Nevis team

THE Mayor of Dudley and an MP are among a group of climbers gearing up to scale Ben Nevis in memory of the Dudley mountaineer, peace campaigner and charity fundraiser Bert Bissell.

Dudley North MP Ian Austin and mayor Councillor Mohammed Hanif will join around 20 fundraisers tackling Britain's highest mountain on August 11.

The money raised from the trek will go to the this year's mayor's charities – the Friends of Alfie Johnson which helps children with disabilities and the Dudley Centre for Inclusive Living which supports local people with disabilities and Diabetes UK.

Mr Austin described Bert Bissell, who was a

friend of his family, as an inspiration. Mr Bissell was a probation officer and founded the Young Men's Bible Class at Vicar Street, Dudley. He scaled Ben Nevis at the end of the Second World War to create a peace cairn near its summit.

He died in 1998 and is buried near the mountain. "I'm delighted that the number of local people taking part in our climb and making a donation is growing every year and it goes to show the enduring legacy of Bert's work in the community," said Mr Austin.

"He was a legendary figure and an inspiration to so many of us."

To support the trek, visit the bertbissellmemorialwalk.co.uk website.

Council to shut its last residential care home

THE LAST council-run residential care home in Dudley is to close.

Cash-strapped Dudley Council has approved a move to close Russell Court Residential Intermediate Care Home in September.

This will put 62 jobs at risk and forcing its nine permanent residents to move.

Council chiefs have ruled the care home will be shut on September 30, as part of a move to save £500,000 in 2016-17.

By closing the home on Overfield Road, they expect to make £1 million in savings for 2017-18.

The decision has infuriated UKIP Councillor Paul Brothwood, who fears it will lead to more 'bed-blocking' in local hospitals.

He said: "Time and time again the council makes short term decisions to either close or privatise care homes, and it is only putting more pressure on the health service.

Crisis

"The NHS is in a state of crisis and if people can't get out of hospital into care homes like this then beds will continue to be blocked."

Russell Court is Dudley's only remaining residential home for older people which is solely managed by the authority. It serves as a stepping stone between hospital and home, with a maximum of 23 intermediate patients at the home at any one time.

Those employed at the home include managers, senior care officers, business support staff, domestics, kitchen staff and care assistants. There are also three therapists.

Transfers, redeployment and voluntary redundancies are proposed for the staff 'to keep the need for compulsory redundancy to a minimum'.

Chiefs said the care home was in need of 'substantial updating' to bring it up to required standards. A quote last year put the cost of refurbishment at £1m.

Councillor Qadar Zada, council cabinet member for adult social care, said: "Over recent years Russell Court has moved from providing long term residential care to intermediate care on a short term basis. It does, however, now need substantial work to update it to the required standards for intermediate care and the decision has been taken to close it.

"The well-being of our residents is of the utmost importance and the council will support the nine residents to transfer to alternative homes."

Harper, 2, is mother's midwife



Brave Harper, aged two, with her mother Natalie Poole, of Dudley, and baby sister Poppy

A TWO-YEAR-OLD turned midwife when she calmly helped her mother give birth to her baby sister at their Dudley home.

Demonstrating bravery well beyond her years, Harper Poole was the only other person at their Ashenhurst Road home when mum Natalie went into labour on Wednesday, June 8.

"It was all happening really quickly," said 34-year-old Natalie. "I rang the hospital and I man-

aged to get myself into the bath but I needed Harper to hold the phone to my ear.

Calm

"She was just so calm and didn't panic at all. She fetched warm towels and kept holding the phone to my ear throughout."

Before the emergency services arrived, Natalie gave birth to baby Poppy.

"Harper stayed with me through it all," said Natalie.

"She said to me afterwards 'I saw the baby pop out mum!' None of it fazed her."

Mother, newborn and her courageous big sister are all doing fine and mum Natalie thinks it may have created a special bond with the sisters now inseparable.

"Harper won't leave Poppy's side. They have a special bond already," she said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Another city route closing for works

A MAJOR route into Birmingham city centre is to close for refurbishment works which could last seven months.

Highways England has issued a public notice outlining the planned works to the A38(M) Aston Expressway, due to begin on Monday.

Both southbound and northbound carriageways of the expressway are set to be closed for waterproofing, concrete repairs and resurfacing to take place. The road remains open for local authority and emergency vehicles.

Meanwhile, traffic is still affected by ongoing work at Paradise Circus.

MP organises a fair for Aldi jobs

MP Ian Austin has organised a jobs fair focussing on opportunities at the new Aldi store on the Priory Road site of the King Arthur pub.

Residents have been invited to discuss jobs and questions about the supermarket with Aldi bosses on Saturday at 11am at Priory Primary School, Limes Road. The store will open later this year employing 35 and six deputy managers. Dudley North MP Mr Austin said: "One of the reasons local people supported Aldi's plan for a new supermarket was because it would create over 40 new jobs."

Fun times for the under 5s at park

A BIG weekend of fun at Himley Hall and Park kicks off tomorrow (Friday).

The park will be transformed with a man-made beach for the under-5s and the Himley land train will be departing from a specially created Himley Station.

The annual fun day, from 10am to 3pm, is this year supported by the Grand Theatre. Admission is £4 for adults, £4 for children aged two to five and £2.50 for children under 2. A family ticket costs £14.

Celebrating song and dance from Tudor era

A CHURCH in Halesowen is planning a celebration of all things Elizabethan on Saturday.

The Tudor and Shakespeare event takes place on Saturday from 10.15am to 5pm at St John the Baptist Church, Halesowen's parish church and the town's oldest building. People can listen to a free morning concert by counter-tenor Jonathan Spencer, lutenist Mike Ashley and recorder player David Yates. With dancing and sonnets in the afternoon.

Carousel needs men

CRADLEY Heath Amateur Operatic Society is calling for more men to join the group to take part in its November production of Carousel.

Rehearsals have already begun for Rodgers and Hammerstein's classic at Brierley Hill Civic Hall. Contact Anne Saunders on 0121 556 3676.

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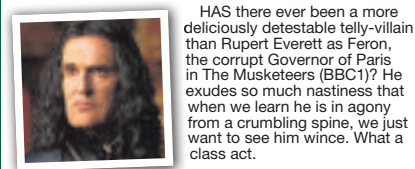
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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

THE hour approaches. If you've missed the arguments on the EU referendum, here's a quick summary. If we vote Leave, income tax will go up, pensions will be cut, a plague of locusts will descend and we get Michael Gove as prime minister. If we vote Remain, our kettles will stop working, all bananas will be straight and a million Turks will arrive at Dover next weekend. Good luck.

A LOCAL imam popped up in the wake of the Orlando massacre to sing the praises of "my peaceful religion." So which bit of the Koran is peaceful towards gays? Islam, Judaism and Christianity have all spent hundreds of years preaching that homosexuality leads to hellfire. Suddenly, having inspired loathing and distrust for so long, some holy men now want to appear all loving and inclusive. The Book of Jeremiah is part of all three religions. It includes the famous verse that tells us the leopard cannot change his spots. Can religions?



HAS there ever been a more deliciously detestable telly-villain than Rupert Everett as Feron, the corrupt Governor of Paris in The Musketeers (BBC1)? He exudes so much nastiness that when we learn he is in agony from a crumbling spine, we just want to see him wince. What a class act.

I'M already missing Ben Elton's comedy series, Upstart Crow (BBC2) starring David Mitchell as the yet-to-be-famous Shakespeare, bouncing half-formed speeches and sonnets off his unappreciative friends and family. Elton kept the in-jokes at an Eng Lit level most of us could understand. But quite why he gave Shakespeare's family Birmingham accents is anyone's guess. Shakespeare came from Warwickshire so it's likely his family spoke with a rural Warwickshire accent. Could it be, forsooth, that Elton, like so many Londoners, simply thinks Brummies are good for a cheap laugh?

ONE headline on the revelations about Clement Freud was: "Shocked widow says sorry to her husband's victims." In fact, Lady Freud apologised quickly and did not seem in the least shocked. I fear this will run and run.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

'Lost' taxi driver fined for charging double

A TAXI driver claimed he was lost after taking a passenger wanting a four-mile journey in the Black Country on a detour to Birmingham – costing him twice the fare.

A court heard that on December 9, Talbraiz Ali, 35, was asked by his customer to go from Cape Hill ito Sandwell and Dudley rail station.

But Ali, who was working for 247 Cars and had only been a taxi driver for 28 days, took the passenger to Harborne and then charged £15 for the trip – more than double the expected fare.

Father-of-two Ali, of Minstead Road, Erdington, pleaded guilty to a charge of 'unnecessary prolonging of a journey by hackney carriage' at Sandwell Magistrates Court on Tuesday.

Prosecuting on behalf of Sandwell Council, Mr David Elliot explained that a man called for a taxi from 247 Cars from the McDonald's at Cape Hill.

Diversion

Asking to be taken to Sandwell and Dudley Railway Station the passenger was surprised when Ali turned left towards Birmingham instead.

"He asked the driver where he was going, who said that he wanted to avoid the traffic," said Mr Elliot.

Ali proceeded to take more and more of a diversion then charged his passenger £15 when they eventually reached the station.

The court was told that

By Judith Hawkins

Ali had only started driving a taxi in Sandwell the previous month.

Mr Elliot added that it would be up to the council's licensing committee to determine to what extent they would also penalise Ali.

Representing Ali, Michael Wooldridge said: "This is an unfortunate matter – it defies any logical explanation."

Mr Wooldridge stressed that this was Ali's second job, with his main employment being at a factory, and said that his limited English may have added to the problem.

Mr Wooldridge said: "He took a wrong turn at the start and it all went from there."

"It is not a case where he has deliberately gone around the houses."

Ali received a conditional discharge lasting 12 months and was ordered to pay costs of £250 with a victim surcharge of £15.

Students a cut above the rest



Halesowen College barbering students Jess Meneer, Dan Warren and national contest runner-up Alesha Spalding

A STUDENT at Halesowen College has come second in the prestigious National Student Barber of the Year competition.

Alesha Spalding came runner-up in the classic category during the competition held at the NEC, Birmingham.

There were only ten finalists in each category, drawn from all around the country.

Three other students from the college were finalists in the contest.

Dan Warren was also a finalist in the classic category with Tom Bennett and Jess Meneer finalists in the creative (trend) category.

Proud

Paula Evans, barbering lecturer at Halesowen College, said: "Congratulations to all four students who reached the final of the British Barbers' Association Student Barber of the Year."

"And massive congratulations to Alesha on coming second in this prestigious contest."

"We are all really proud of their achievements."

Jobs on horizon if estate expands

THE owner of the biggest industrial estate in the Black Country has unveiled multi-million pound plans for a massive 260,000 sq ft expansion that could create hundreds of jobs.

London & Cambridge Properties (LCP) plans to extend Pensnett Estate, Kingswinford, with a series of warehouse and industrial units.

The plans for the first phase of the development, comprising 130,000 sq ft, have been submitted to Dudley Council.

LCP is a major UK property and development company with its own headquarters on the Pensnett Estate.

Biggest

Among its various Black Country sites it also owns the Wulfrun shopping centre in Wolverhampton.

Its Pensnett site is one of the biggest secure business estates in Europe, home to 170 businesses in more than 2.4 million sq ft of commercial space.

The first phase of work will create four blocks of factory and warehousing units on land behind LCP's headquarters on First Avenue.

If Dudley's planning committee gives the development the go ahead, work could start as early as the end of this year, with an anticipated completion date of late 2017.



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Society invests in future as profits rise

PROFITS are up by £448,000 at Dudley Building Society. The pre-tax profit for the year to the end of March was £1.335 million from £887,000 for 2014-2015.

Total assets have risen to more than £350m as it undertook £57.4m of lending with reserves rising to £19.9m.

Chief executive Jeremy Wood said: "I am pleased that we are announcing another year of growth that has been achieved in a controlled and measured way. This year has seen us update our lending policies, introduce new products, improve service standards and concentrate our efforts on where we believe our greatest strengths lie.

"We have continued to invest in our Society and our branch network, most recently the relocation of our Kingswinford branch to a bigger more prominent home in the Townsend Place precinct. It is important that we stay true to our roots and respond to demand - receiving pleasing national press coverage when we scrapped upper age limits for borrowers across our whole mortgage product range is testimony to that."

The society's annual meeting is at Himley Hall on July 21 at 2pm when guest Pippa Greenwood, TV gardening expert, will be giving a talk. Branch users have selected Mary Stevens Hospice as their charity of the year.

Patriotic variety night being held at church

A BLACKHEATH church will be holding an evening of entertainment to celebrate the Queen's birthday.

There will be a variety of music on offer along with audience participation at St Paul's Church, in Long Lane, on Saturday. Guests are urged to bring patriotic hats, scarves and flags. Admission is free.

Housing crisis charity fears thousands of tenants at risk

Store to help focus on Astle campaign



Jeff Astle's wife, Laraine and daughter, Dawn, with Carl Barratt at the Luke menswear store in Merry Hill. A MENSWEAR store is joining the campaign led by the daughter of West Brom legend Jeff Astle, raising awareness of the long-term impact of footballers' head injuries.

Dawn Astle has expressed her delight that Luke 1977, which has outlets in the Merry Hill and Bullring shopping centres, will be raising money for The Jeff Astle Foundation.

The foundation was set up after a

neuro-surgeon determined that her father had died of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), otherwise known as boxer's brain. This has led to extensive research to identify whether his fatal condition was the result of repeatedly heading heavy footballs.

To support the ongoing campaign, throughout the duration of the UEFA Euro 2016 competition, Luke 1977's shops will be taking donations for the

foundation from customers and will be donating £100 every time England score.

Head of sales at Luke 1977, Carl Barratt, explained that as West Brom fan himself he had heard of the Justice for Jeff campaign. Dawn said: "It is incredible and we were taken aback when we heard they wanted to help us. We encourage everyone to come into the store and see what's on offer."

MORE than 3,300 people living in the Black Country and Staffordshire were put at risk of losing their rented home during the past year, figures reveal.

Analysis of statistics from the Ministry of Justice, by housing charity Shelter, also show that one in every 62 people in the West Midlands faced eviction after falling behind on their rent.

The figures reveal that 992 families were at risk in Sandwell compared with 893 in Wolverhampton, 731 in Dudley, 568 in Walsall, 158 in Cannock, 144 in Stafford and 91 in South Staffordshire.

Shelter says that people have been struggling because of the shortage of affordable homes combined with crippling welfare cuts. The Government figures record possession claims, which are the first stage in a process that can ultimately end with the loss of a home.

Desperation

Shelter's Daniel Blake said: "Every day at Shelter we hear from people who are struggling to keep up with their rent, many in total desperation." More people facing eviction who are coming to the charity for help.

More than 9,800 people at risk of losing their home called the Shelter helpline for advice in the past year with 500,000 people visiting the Shelter website's eviction advice pages. Nationally, around 350,000 tenants in England have been put at risk of eviction in the last year.

Mr Blake added: "Anyone struggling to keep up or facing eviction, or is not sure what to do next, should get expert advice as soon as possible. It can be the difference between losing a home and keeping it."

To contact Shelter visit shelter.org.uk/advice or call 0808 8004444.

Start-up prize will honour council leader

A BUSINESS awards event this summer is to name its prize for start-up companies in honour of Darren Cooper, the leader of Sandwell Council who died suddenly this year.

Ninder Johal, organiser of the Nacural Summer Business Ball and Awards at Wolverhampton Racecourse on July 15, said: "He was such an advocate of start ups and enterprise. He led many initiatives during his time at Sandwell Council such as preferential rental rates for start-ups in specially designed incubator units."

"I am sure that he would be proud of the legacy he left for encouraging individuals to set up their businesses. For a region to flourish, there needs to be steady birth of new businesses. This Darren Cooper start-up award emphasizes this. The awards seek to celebrate and highlight the ever increasing importance of the Asian business community."

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Here's an idea, get rid of all bus lanes

THERE is a brilliant spoof doing the rounds where David Cameron warns that if Britain leaves the EU, the DFS sale could be about to end.

The gag has him claiming that "A vote for Brexit is a vote for bigotry, permanent global recession and full-price sofas", explaining how King John signed the Magna Carta on The Canterbury, "a stylish corner group with floral scatter cushions."

Is it just me, or is the most insightful commentary we have had on the subject so far?

YIPPEE! I'm sure you will all be as delighted me to hear that in just 12 months Wolverhampton Council has nabbed 71,000 motorists for driving in bus lanes, generating up to £4.2 million in fines. In a city with a population of 250,000 – where 35 per cent of households have no car – that's some going.

Apparently, there is a team of trained observers whose job it is to wait for one of the cameras to go off, and then watch the footage of their quarry caught on television. Wouldn't you just love to invite them round for dinner?.

Still, the cash generated during the scheme has nothing whatsoever to do with reducing the council's deficit, and all the money will be spent on 'highway improvement schemes'.

Hmm. I wonder how many of these 'improvements' involve white paint, confusing road signs, and yet more lovely cameras?

The council, of course, does not want anybody to be fined, and would love nothing more than for everybody to refrain from driving in the bus lanes.

And you know what? I agree. And I think I have come up with a very workable way that the council can turn this utopian vision into a reality. Get rid of all bus lanes.

Look, there's nothing wrong with buses, I used one myself only last week. But surely, given Wolverhampton Council's commitment to equality and diversity, it would not wish to treat some road users more equally than others.

BESIDES, how can the driver of any vehicle be expected to understand bus lanes following new research which says the average human now has an attention span shorter than that of a goldfish?

A study commissioned by Microsoft reckons we are all now so addicted to our smart phones that our attention span is now just eight seconds, down from 12 seconds just 16 years ago. By way of comparison, a goldfish can focus for nine seconds.

Meanwhile, new research says we now have an attention span shorter than that of a goldfish. We are so addicted to our smartphones...



The rustic bridge, based on one from 1925



An old picture showing how it all used to be



On the staircase that has been boxed in to protect it



One of the rooms for weddings and conferences



With the plaque to royal gardener John Tradescant



A view of the Shakespeare garden

Bringing Lightwoods back to former glory

As work continues on Lightwoods House in Smethwick, **HEATHER LARGE** reveals its uncovered treasures

THEY'VE been hidden away for years but now historic features at a Sandwell Grade II-listed house will proudly be going back on show as part of a £5.2million restoration project.

William Morris wallpaper, grand ceiling decorations and colourful wall stencils are among the little bits of history uncovered by workers at Lightwoods House in Smethwick.

Since the house was built within the 16-acre Lightwoods Park in 1791, it's had many uses. But after the last occupants, stained glass artists John Hardman & Co Ltd, moved out eight years ago, it fell into a bad state of repair.

In February last year, a long-awaited project to bring the property back into use for the community got under way by Sandwell Council with the help of the Friends of Lightwoods House and Park.

Conferencing

This is has seen the roof repaired and retiled, windows and doors replaced and rotten wood removed. All of the rooms are being renovated and by next spring will be used for offices, a tea room, exhibition space, conferencing and training events, a children's centre and weddings.

"It's great seeing the house changing. The outside looks great. We haven't seen the front looking so crisp and smart for a long time. On the ground floor there will be a community or meeting room and the tea room. The upper floor is where there will be offices and the large former master bedroom which can be used for conferencing or weddings," said Julia Morris, community engagement officer for Lightwoods House and Park. Discoveries made during the



From left, Julia Morris, council leader Steve Eling, and Richard Marshall, at Lightwoods Park renovation work will go on show once the project has been completed to ensure they are preserved for future generations.

They include original decorative ceiling cornices found in some of the rooms, which have been saved and will be replicated with help of students from Sandwell College.

William Morris wallpaper was uncovered in the master bedroom when they stripped back the ceiling and a former safe room with a heavy steel door.

Slates used on the roof are reclaimed and have been inscribed with messages from local schoolchildren.

While stencil designs were found on a wall by the main staircase and their story was told by an apprentice for John Hardman & Co Ltd,

who helped create them. It's believed they have been there for around 15 years.

"We found out that an apprentice held the stencil on the wall while the artist painted. We found this out when the apprentice visited on a house tour we ran. He got told off by the boss so the design was unfinished. We plan to leave it on show and put a plaque on the wall explaining how it came about," said Julia.

It's not just the house which is undergoing a transformation. A play area has already been finished and is being enjoyed by local children. A rustic bridge has been installed, based on the design taken from an old photograph of the bridge that was there in around 1925. A new pond and wildlife area will be created nearby. Work has also begun to bring the 19th



Part of the ornate cornice detail on the ceiling



Uncovered – William Morris wall coverings century bandstand, which will be licensed for weddings, back to life.

Also due to get a makeover is the Shakespeare garden at the back of the house, which is home to a tribute to royal gardener John Tradescant, and the drinking fountains.

Educational and events programmes are also planned for the park and house which will give people the chance to discover and learn about the park's heritage and wildlife as well volunteering and training to enable volunteers to help care for the site.

In the future, it is hoped the site can secure a Green Flag and a Green Heritage Award.

Construction work is expected to be finished in the autumn and an official opening is due to take place in the spring.

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Research shows trauma link to football

I CAN understand the frustration of Dawn Astle ('Football legend's daughter hits out at lack of action by FA', The Chronicle, June 9).

The problems of repetitive head injury have been recognised and investigated for many years.

Fairly recently it was given an official name: Cumulative Traumatic Encephalopathy or CTE.

A recent film, 'Concussion', highlighted the problems, including deaths and suicides, among American football players.

Funding key to quality of health care

YOUR front page article on local mental health services (May 26) made no mention of funding. Patient safety rated as 'poor' could surely be explained by insufficient funding.

It seems that watchdogs like the CQC simply report what they see, no questions are raised about underlying conditions. It is well known that mental health services are the poor relation of physical health services.

It is even better known that since the banking crash in 2008, Britain has been plunged into austerity. George Osborne as chancellor, in particular, has made savage cuts in public spending to which the NHS has not been immune.

A recent article in the Financial Times showed the public's perception of immigration and the strain on public services to be at odds with university researchers who rated austerity as the key factor. Let's have some balance.

JOHN PAYNE
Dudley Green Party
Halesowen

The American football authorities were also very reluctant to accept medical findings or to accept any responsibility for the problems but eventually they had to and it is now costing them millions of dollars in compensation.

It's absolutely no good the FA saying they are awaiting the outcome of 'research' into this issue - the research has already been exhaustively pursued and the results are known.

ALAN ASHMAN
Sedgley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chrons@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Very indignant and suspicious over register extension

I'M a VIP. No, I'm not important, except possibly to friends and loved ones, no, I'm a Very Indignant Person.

Why? Simple, people who were given three months to register to vote, leaving it until the last 'minute' then finding themselves 'disenfranchised'.

So the important people in Westminster give them an extra couple of days to register themselves. Why?

Couldn't be because those already registered may not want to be a vassal of the greater European state but those who register 'late'

may enable the EU 'remain' to achieve the victory they seem to badly need to justify their positions, could it?

Frankly, the decision stinks.

It is anti-democratic to try to influence the outcome on June 23, if this is the case.

Still they can always apply the same reasoning for a 're-vote' as happened in Ireland after the vote on the Lisbon agreement didn't go the way that was wanted.

Some of us do have memories greater than three seconds.

M GOUGH
Wombourne

Ali always 'the greatest'

I WAS a big fan of Muhammad Ali from the early 60s when he beat Sonny Liston to win the title when no-one gave him a chance.

When he fought our Henry Cooper first time he was show-boating and got caught by the left hook and put down. Most who got caught by Henry's left hook stayed down but he got up and won the fight and also beat him when champion.

One of the best nights of my life was when I saw Ali live on stage at the Odeon, Birmingham, talking about this career. He also did three rounds exhibition with his sparring partner Jimmy Ellis. It was packed to the rafters.

Muhammad Ali was a great fighter and entertainer. I will always admire him; you will never see his like again. RIP Muhammad Ali.

M HARPER
Coseley

Praise for the GPs' practice

THE 'outstanding service rating' awarded to Eve Hill Medical Practice in Himley Road, Dudley, comes as no surprise to people like myself who are registered there.

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Dudley councillors Peter Lowe and Patrick Harley



Support – Citizen Khan, otherwise known as Adil Ray



Lead singer of Judas Priest, Rob Halford shows his true colours

Stars back the Black Country

THE organisers behind the Black Country Festival are on the lookout for the best talent the region has to offer, to ensure this year's event is bigger and better than ever.

Steve Edwards and James Stevens have become known as 'The Black Country Boys' after their success over the last couple of years in bringing together a wide array of attractions for the annual celebration, which will be taking place once again throughout next month.

"The Black Country festival is about bringing the communities together and promoting our amazing region," said Steve.

"Last year we were involved in well over 500 events ranging from barbecues for as little as 20 people, to filling football stadiums with over 20,000 people.

"We brought back iconic events like The Halesowen Carnival which had not happened

for 20 years, and we also put new events on in Bilston, Cradley Heath and Walsall." The Halesowen Carnival will be among the events kicking off this year's festival. It is taking place on July 2 at Highfield Park between 12 noon and 6pm, complete with market, fair, music, dance and much more.

The next day, July 3, will see the return of The Black Country Road Run, which last year saw over 1,100 people take part and raised £23,000.

Events on the following weekend include The Brockmoor and Pensnett Black Country Funday, from 1pm to 5pm on July 10 at the Dell Stadium, with live performances and everything from historical re-enactment groups to alternate wrestling.

Moreover, this year they have succeeded in getting 12 of the biggest Black Country brewers to back the festival, who not only will be uniting on July 29, 30 and 31 for the return of The Dudley Beer Festival, but will be hosting over 150 festival events in pubs throughout

July. Other events include comedy gigs, flashmob dances and sports tournaments, but they are eager to add more to the schedule.

Famous faces are also getting involved. Throughout the past year the organisers have been informing celebrities about the festival, and getting them to show their support by holding up the Black Country flag.

These include Glenn Close, Gemma Arterton and Paddy Considine, who Steve met on the set of film 'She Who Brings Gifts' when they came to shoot in Birmingham.

He explained: "I casually walked over to their trailer and introduced myself and produced The Black Country Flag. Glenn Close was particularly interested in the history of The Black Country and the role it played in the industrial revolution.

After chatting for about half hour and explaining what the festival was trying to do for the community, they were more than happy to have their picture taken with the flag."

Co-organiser James Stevens is the man be-

hind the infamous Black Country Anthem 'I Vow To Thee Black Country' which reached the UK top 40 in 2014.

Proud of their achievements so far, James added: "Last year was an exceptional year for the Black Country and the festival. The Flag was seen flying all over the world and it is the second most popular flag in England, only being out sold by the St Georges Flag."

"The Black Country is all about community, pride and having fun. Black Country people are the salt of the earth, we are full of pride for our historic region and the festival allows us all to come together showcase everything that is great about the Black Country."

"We want all local businesses to get in touch with us and show the world what The Black Country still has to offer."

The festival organisers also want to hear from local performers. To get involved, and find out the events happening near you, contact Steve and James via the official website black-country-festival.co.uk

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Strictly star's surprise birthday visit



Strictly Come Dancing star Anton du Beke is pictured with members of Side by Side theatre group in Stourbridge. It was strictly a surprise as Stourbridge theatre company Side by Side had a visit from top TV ballroom dancer Anton du Beke. The star of Strictly Come Dancing popped in to surprise dancer Suzy Schwartz at her 21st birthday party. Susan Wallin, choreographer, said: "Suzy and her friends from Side by Side couldn't believe their eyes when the door opened and Anton du Beke walked in the room."

No longer open all hours

ROUND-THE-CLOCK opening at Tesco stores will cease at 20 of its stores, the retail giant has announced.

The company is scrapping 24-hour opening at supermarkets including the store in the Crown Centre at Stourbridge. The opening hours will change to 6am to midnight.

A total of 1,750 employees are affected with a consultation period launched. Night shifts will end for staff at 46 of its stores.

Tesco also has 24-hour stores in the Black Country at Burnt Tree, West Bromwich, Walsall and Willenhall but these are currently not affected.

A spokesman for the firm said the changes were to ensure the 'stores were the best they could be during the busiest times'.

He added that the stores ending round-the-clock opening had low numbers of people visiting overnight.

Tesco UK chief operating officer Tony Hoggett said: "We're making some changes to the way a small number of our stores operate to help us run them more simply and deliver the best possible service to customers"

Tesco in Stourbridge opened three years ago as part of the revamped Crown Centre.

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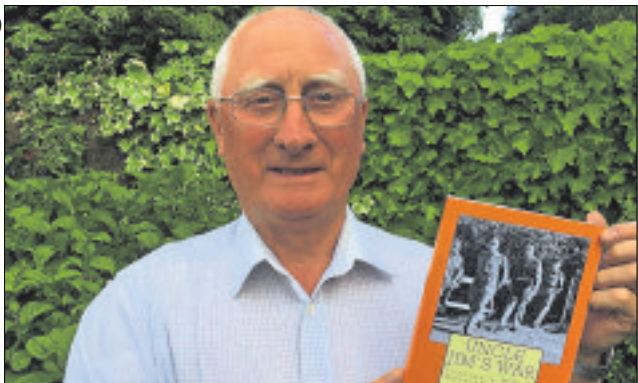
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To celebrate the Milestone Anniversary of the shop, Neil decided he wanted to give something back to the customers by changing the look of the shop completely and making something truly one of its kind in the surrounding areas! The shop was completely ripped out and additional premises to the rear added... Quadrupling the size of the initial premises. No expenses were spared on the interior and the brand new luxury chairs where the Barbershops loyal clients park their bums to enjoy the amazing new services that they now provide.

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In addition to this, while the shop was in the process of the refurbishment Neil decided he wanted to go the extra mile and provide his customers with a place to eat and drink while waiting for a trim. He did this with the introduction of the brand new coffee shop attached providing delicious food and freshly ground coffee!

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Graham Wilkins with a copy of 'Uncle Jim's War'



Jim with King George, General Miles Dempsey and Monty



Jim, arrowed, seen with his army comrades, at Chateau Cruelly on July 14, 1944

Author on the trail of Uncle Jim's wartime adventures and heroics

"IT was so typical of the time, an ordinary hard working person being called up to fight, changing their life forever in the process."

A Walsall author has written the incredible story of his uncle's time on the front line during the Second World War.

Jim Shaw, a 'quiet and hard working man', was wounded three times and missing believed killed for two weeks after going ashore on Gold Beach on D-day.

He eventually returned home safely, but never spoke about his time in the Army with his family.

Jim had been a member of two different regiments during his time, firstly with the South Staffordshire Regiment, before moving on to the East Yorkshire Regiment.

After his death aged 94, nephew Graham Wilkins was given permission to access his service records and has spent 5000 hours over the last five years compiling information to put together 'Uncle Jim's War'.

MEMORY LANE

By Jordan Harris

Graham said: "Uncle Jim was an ordinary Walsall man. He was quiet, hardworking when in 1940 when he was called up to do his duty for King and country."

"When I look at his early photos, it strikes me as strange that this innocent looking young man could make such a sacrifice for his country."

"Our family did not know any of the detail of the battles he had been engaged in because he would never speak about it except to say how terrible the war was."

"After demob he was content to resume life as an ordinary working man never seeking any promotion greater than lowly worker."

After speaking with Jim's two sons, Graham tracked down his uncle's service records, going on to track his path throughout the war.

He discovered that Jim, who was called

up to the Army aged 24 and achieved the rank of private, had been involved in some of the most famous battles, taking him across North Africa, Sicily, France, Holland, Belgium and more.

Among others, he was involved in the Siege of Tobruk, the First Battle of Alamein, the Battle of Gazala and the Allied Invasion of Sicily.

Graham said: "We all agreed it would be great to find out more about Jim's life in the Army, because we were all so proud."

"Once I had the service records I was able to trace his regiments, their movements and engagements, and with this information I was able to trace the appropriate daily war diaries from the National Archives and track his path through the six years duration of the war."

"The results were amazing. He was involved in some of the most famous battles of the war including three seaborne invasions. On D-Day he was one of the first to land on Gold beach."

"A couple of weeks later he was reported

'missing believed killed' when I asked him about it all he would say is 'we got lost' but it was much more than that."

Jim's time in the forces put him in touch with royalty on more than one occasion.

A picture in the book shows him saluting King George IV, prior to the King knighting General Miles Dempsey on the battlefield.

When the war was over, it didn't end for Jim, who was sent to Norway to help with the surrender of 85,000 German soldiers who it was feared might not surrender and take over Norway in Operation Doodson.

His work here led him to receive a letter of thanks from King Olav V.

Graham's attempts to track down more about his uncle's past brought out a 'reflective' side to him and brought back happy memories of the man he calls 'my favourite uncle'.

He said: "It was emotional at times and always hard work but I am immensely proud of the results. Everyone in the family agrees that it is a lovely tribute."

Uncle Jim's War is available on Amazon.



A young Jim Shaw, 'a quiet and hard working man'

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Cricketers finally batting away thieves



West Midlands PCC David Jamieson with Netherton CC President Dennis Lewis after handing over £3,000

A CRICKET club has been given £3,000 of criminals' cash to improve its security after being broken in to seven times in eight weeks.

Netherton Cricket Club had doors ripped from hinges and windows shattered during late night 'wanton vandalism', with thieves also getting away with sporting equipment, two TVs, a microwave and bar stock.

The crimes left the club volunteers worried and demoralised but to help the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner issued a grant from the Proceeds of Crime Act fund, which uses criminals' ill-gotten

gains for the public good. The money was spent on fitting security roller shutters on the windows, a new alarm system and a CCTV system. After one more failed attempt at a break-in, attacks on the clubhouse have dwindled.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "There is a sense of justice in using criminals' cash for good in the community."

"What happened at Netherton Cricket Club is awful. This is a historic community club run by volunteers that also offers lots of facilities for local youngsters and I can see why

they were so disheartened to be the repeated victims of crime.

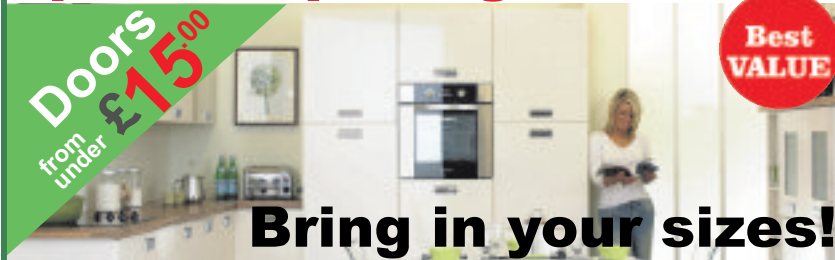
"I am so pleased this money has improved things at the club and I would encourage any community group that is facing similar issues to apply for cash through the Act, which now comes under the Active Citizens umbrella."

Dennis Lewis, President of Netherton Cricket Club, said: "The crooks now find the clubhouse impenetrable. We'd definitely encourage others to apply for this funding."

Visit the West Midlands PCC website and search for 'active funding'.

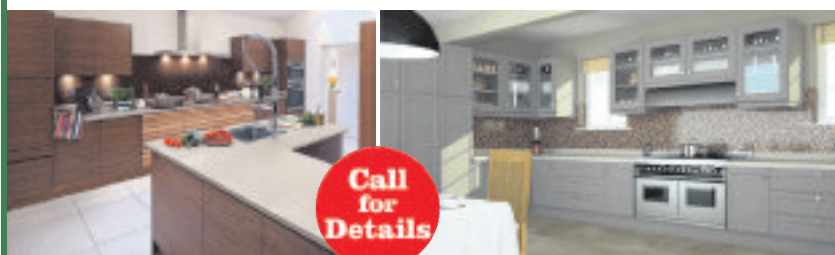
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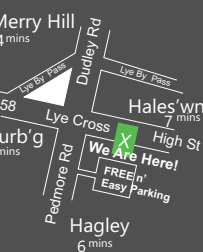
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Doctor caught in pay fraud hit with bill for £75,000

A 'DISHONEST' doctor who defrauded the NHS in Wales by taking on shifts at a hospital in the Black Country while off sick has been ordered to pay back more than £75,000.

Gynaecologist Anthony Madu was hit with the £75,620.73 bill at Cardiff Crown Court on Monday after a probe by the NHS Counter Fraud Service (Wales). Madu, aged 47, of The Oaks, Woolwich, London, must pay the money within six months or face two years in prison.

Going loco as weekend steams ahead

CLUN Castle, Earl of Mount Edgumbe and many other locomotives can be seen at the Tysley Locomotive Works steam open weekend.

The event at the former Birmingham Railway Museum this weekend includes train rides and workshop tours. Trade Gates are open from 10am on both days with admission for adults £15 and accompanied children 15 and under are free.

Tysley's flagship steam locomotive Clun Castle was recently reunited with its boiler after an overhaul as part of its ongoing restoration.

Clun Castle is one of only two surviving modified Castle Class steam locomotives, built for the Great Western Railway from 1923 to 1950 to haul high-speed express trains.

Clun Castle was purchased from British Rail and saved from an uncertain future in 1966 by a group led by Mr Pat Whitehouse for a little over £3,000. The current overhaul began in earnest in 2010.

He was found guilty in December 2014 at Newport Crown Court of six counts of fraud and handed a suspended two-year jail term and 150 hours' community service.

Madu worked in a number of hospitals while on paid suspension and sick leave from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, which employed him between August 2009 and June 2010. He got the work through an employment agency. By October 2009 he had been suspended due to concerns over his professional conduct and integrity.

Yorkshire

In March 2010, Madu informed the Health Board he was receiving counselling and medical help, and was not able to work, supplying a medical certificate covering January 23 to June 2, 2010. The Health Board terminated Madu's employment on June 10, 2010.

It was later discovered he had been working as a locum at Scarborough District Hospital, Yorkshire while on sick leave. Investigators established Madu had also worked at Sandwell General Hospital and The Royal Oldham Hospital, Greater Manchester, throughout this sick period.

He was arrested in November 2011. Madu earned an extra £69,000 at the other hospitals in addition to his Cardiff and Vale University Health Board salary. This secondary employment was never declared to his employer – as was legally required.

Monstrous mural marks street art start



The huge mural painted on the factory wall in Birmingham's Coventry Street

A HUGE new mural has been daubed on a wall in Birmingham city centre ahead of new street art festival.

The artwork shows a massive scaly animal with branch-like antlers lifting people to safety from water. Given the recent wet weather that has caused chaos across the region it seems a fitting addition. Renowned artist Phlegm painted the striking piece in just three days on the wall of a factory in Digbeth's Coventry Street, to promote this year's City of Colours Festival.

Phlegm is the first of more than 120

artists to touch down in Birmingham for the free-entry street art event.

His monstrous effort is the first of dozens likely to be produced at the festival, which started on Saturday.

The street artists have been invited to paint, draw and exhibit their work on as many walls and other canvases as possible. Festival bosses said the event will be a platform for 'promoting emerging talent alongside more established artists'. The event will be spread over 15 venues, with 10 music stages, a range of exciting performances and

participatory activities, a market hall and street food. Festival bosses said: "The festival will reflect the vibrancy of its people and its places, bringing together different communities, family and friends of all ages to enjoy the electric atmosphere."

Entrance to the City of Colours festival is free. Gourmet street food will be available to cater for all tastes with a range of vendors providing cuisine from around the world including Caribbean, Japanese, Greek, Italian and Thai.

Family fun with Armed Forces event

MEMBERS of the public have been invited to show their support for the men and women of Britain's Armed Forces at a special event in Oldbury town centre. The Armed Forces Day on Saturday will include children's activities and entertainment.

A military parade will start at the Low Town car park at 11.30am and will finish outside Sandwell Council House. The crowds and military service personnel will be addressed by the Deputy Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Susan Downing, at 11.45am.

After the speech, members of the public will be able to enjoy a family fun day in the Civic Square with various stalls and attractions. There will be a mobile climbing wall, mountain bike/BMX course and trampolines. On the stage, singers, dhol drummers, a children's dance group and a choir will be providing entertainment.

Councillor Downing said: "We hope that there will be a good turnout. People will have the opportunity to see the parade and then get involved with some fun, family entertainment."

During the official ceremony, Sandwell Council will re-sign the Armed Forces Covenant. Any Sandwell veterans who would like their medals or badges to be formally presented at the Armed Forces Day event should call the Mayor's Parlour on 0121 569 3041.

New flights from Brum to the Balearics

BIRMINGHAM Airport has welcomed Spanish airline AlbaStar, which has launched twice-weekly flights between the city and the Mediterranean holiday island of Majorca.

The route to Palma will be served by a Boeing 737-400 aircraft and will operate on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

It is the 12th new airline in the space of just over a year to commence flights from Birmingham Airport.

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Awards in thanks for Beacon Centre volunteers

THE selfless work of hundreds of volunteers has been recognised during an awards presentation at the Beacon Centre in Sedgley.

Around 250 volunteers support the Black Country sight-loss charity in a variety of roles, from shop assistants to minibus drivers.

At last week's awards ceremony, held during National Volunteer Week, all the centre's helpers received a 'thank you' letter and a small gift.

Years

One of the volunteers of the year was Heena Patel, who has been helping at the charity's Bilston shop for 16 years, working six days a week.

Shop manager Sarah Fletcher said: "The shop wouldn't be the same without her. She is worth her weight in gold."

Another volunteer highlighted for her valuable contribution was Chris Guy from Finchfield, who started helping after retiring six years ago.

"I wanted to keep active and do something positive," said Chris. "I am also very passionate about raising awareness of sight loss in the wider community.

The charity's chief executive Arwyn Jones said: "It is so important to hold these awards, to say thank you for all the wonderful work our volunteers do for us. We couldn't do it without them."

The Beacon Centre's volunteer programme opportunities available at both its Sedgley and Stourbridge centres, including positions on the talking newspaper.

Email rhshaw@beaconvision.org or call 01902 880111.



Time for thanks – Chief executive of the Beacon Centre Arwyn Jones, front centre, with volunteers

M-way project is to get art motoring

ARTISTS are to transform an unsightly stretch of motorway through the Black Country with homegrown creative artworks.

West Midlands-based MADE is searching for five artists from the Black Country and Birmingham to spruce up sections under the M5 in Sandwell as part of a one day project.

The scheme will give a taste of how the area could look as part of MADE's concept to create an 'edgy canal-side' environment in the future for the proposed Black Country Garden City.

The motorway project will take place on July 16.

The concept would see the zone between junctions one and two, which features a canal running under the motorway with thick concrete pillars standing either side, transformed. MADE's M5 Mile concept has envisaged that the site could feature shops, cafes and bars in shipping containers, performance areas, skate-parks and other attractions, under the motorway.

Chosen artists will be given from 10am to 5pm to create their artwork. Each artist is being given £500.

Apology for victim who had to watch raid

A LETTER of apology has been sent by police chiefs to a man who watched his business being raided on CCTV after being told officers could not attend until the next day.

Paul Smart watched on a screen at his home in Chaddesley Corbett as the £20,000 theft take place in real time at his Brierley Hill photographic firm in May.

When he called 999 to report the theft he says he was first told to call the non-emergency number 101 and was then told police would not come out until the next morning.

A letter sent to Mr Smart by Chief Inspector Gary Wade of West Mercia Police stated that he wished to 'express regret' for what happened on behalf of the force.

The officer who took the original call has been 'advised of the correct process in handling these calls'.

In the letter, Chief Inspector Wade said: "I'd like to take this opportunity to express regret on behalf of Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police for the fact you were dissatisfied with the service you received on this occasion.

Concerns

"I hope that the manner in which this matter has subsequently been dealt with has gone some way towards restoring your trust and confidence in the service we deliver."

A report on the action taken against the officer who took the call, also written by Chief Inspector Wade, stated: "The subject has been advised by their superior of the correct process in handling these calls."

But Mr Smart remains unhappy with the police response and has asked that the matter be taken to the Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police Independent Appeals Panel. This is due to a line in the report which states when



Businessman Paul Smart

West Mercia Police told Mr Smart they could not take details of the crime it led to a 'delay in Mr Smart being able to inform the police of a crime in action'.

Mr Smart wrote in reply: "This is clearly not correct, the result of your call handler's advice was the call being downgraded to a Police Non Emergency which resulted in West Midlands Police refusing to attend the scene of a break in and theft in progress.

"In fact the failure to attend allowed the criminals, armed with metal bars, to return to the scene of crime almost an hour after the first call was made to 999."

The raiders made off with computers, keyboards and laptops from Mr Smart's commercial design and photographic studio Doodah Creative.

Along with damage to a window shutter when they forced entry, the overall cost to the firm will be between £20,000 and £25,000.

Taste testing for menu

RESIDENTS of a Hagley care home have been sent on a voyage of food discovery.

Chandos Lodge Residential Home invited its residents and their families to try a range of different foods and award them marks out of five before deciding what to add to their menu. Staff at the Stourbridge Road home wanted to get the residents involved to promote a healthy diet.



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There's a tulip for every garden setting, from borders to containers

Tremendous tulips can be used in so many ways

BEST OF THE BUNCH: Tulips

THERE are tulips for every setting, from delicate species and dwarf varieties to frilly parrots and majestic Darwin, triumph and lily-flowered types, plain, striped, flamed, single and double.

They can be used in many ways – in a mixed border, in a bedding scheme adding uniformity in height and colour, or in rockeries or containers. In mixed borders, you can plant them alongside other plants that will cover the bare ground before the tulips emerge and after they die down. Violas, polyanthus, double daisies and wallflowers are among their most common companions. For dramatic effect plant single varieties of the same colour in pots, avoiding the types with weak stems and heavy flowers with a tendency to flop. Using multi-purpose compost, plant bulbs close together with at least three to four times the depth of the bulb covering them, but leaving enough space for the flowers to open. Good container types include T. 'Queen of Night', with silky purple-black flowers and 'World's Favourite', with glowing orange-red blooms, edged with gold.

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT: Chinese cabbage

YOU can sow all types of oriental greens now to harvest in the summer, but Chinese cabbage takes some beating if harvested young, when the leaves are smaller and tender. Chinese cabbages are either tall and cylindrical or barrel-shaped, and the latter are more suited to our UK climate.

They have a mild flavour and crunchy texture and can be used instead of iceberg lettuce. Sow small amounts at two or three-week intervals for a continuous crop and water them regularly to keep the growth strong. Chinese cabbage will bolt if transplanted from a seedbed, so sow them directly into their final resting places and thin them out later. They need spacing of 30-38cm each way to produce heads and should be planted in soil which has had plenty of compost added before planting. You should be able to start harvesting from August. Chinese cabbage isn't very frost-hardy, so cover later sowings with cloches or garden fleece. Good varieties include 'Kasumi' and 'Early Jade Pagoda'.

No gnomes in gardens of future, says survey

NEARLY 70 per cent of gardens in the Midlands are stuck in the past with almost 64 per cent of the region's homeowners admitting their outdoor space has been influenced by previous decades, according to research conducted by paving manufacturer Bradstone.

A nationwide survey of homeowners with gardens revealed that in the Midlands, 68 per cent of gardens' main features pre-date the 1990s, with 80s wooden slatted fences (42 per cent), 60s manicured lawns (41 per cent) and 50s concrete paths (24 per cent) featuring most prominently as design hangovers from the past.

It seems the region's homeowners have been slow to adopt 21st century garden design, with contemporary features such as raised vegetable beds (13 per cent), mixed native hedging (10 per cent), fire pits (6 per cent), and artificial grass (3 per cent) each present in only one third of gardens.

While almost 41 per cent of respondents in the Midlands said their garden is the most important feature of their home, only 20 per cent are most likely to feel pride when thinking about or looking at their garden – suggesting that as a region, we need to shape up and get our gardening gloves on.

Indeed, 14 per cent of the region's homeowners say they are most likely to feel dread or embarrassment about their garden, and almost 30 per cent feel envious of their neighbours' gardens.

The research, conducted by paving manufacturer, Bradstone, reveals that over 80 per cent of respondents in the region are investing in their home ahead of their outdoor space, leaving more than half frustrated that their garden doesn't look as good as it could.

The top four changes people in the Midlands would most like to make to their garden are adding or replacing fencing, replacing the lawn with new grass, adding or replacing paving, and adding or replacing flowers and plants.

However, our busy lifestyles are getting in the way with over 60 per cent of the region's homeowners avoiding making major changes to their garden because they're worried about the cost and/or work involved.

Regular mowing to keep the lawn in check, weeding, and making it beautiful all year round are the three biggest challenges facing Midland homeowners.

And while as a region we might be behind with the gardening times, weeds (49 per cent), garden gnomes (37 per cent) and pet graves (25 per cent) topped the poll of unacceptable items within a modern garden.

Award winning garden designer and TV presenter, Chris Beardshaw, comments: "Modern gardeners have an unprecedented range of plants to choose from – from exotic edibles to exquisite ornaments, from all corners of the globe – all of which can pretty much be cultivated in our gardens."

Together with easy access to technical information on how to grow plants, it is completely possible to recreate and encapsulate almost any style of garden from any point in history, and from anywhere in the world. So, gardeners simply have to decide how theatrical they want their outdoor space to be."

But what of the garden of the future? Flowers that bloom all year round (40 per cent), more wildlife (36 per cent) and flowers and plants that need no watering (24 per cent) are the top three things people in the Midlands want most. And with more than 68 per cent of UK male homeowners saying they are responsible for mowing the lawn, it's interesting to learn that almost one in every five men would prefer a robot lawnmower to do the job.

Toby Stuart-Jervis, commercial director for Bradstone, who commissioned the study to mark the company's 60th anniversary, said: "No matter what decade your garden reflects, beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

Whether you have a penchant for 60s inspired crazy paving or favour timber decking terraces popularised in the 1990s, your garden should be a space you enjoy, and an extension of your home.

"There are many quick and easy updates you can make without breaking the bank, and the upcoming May bank holiday weekend is an excellent opportunity to get outdoors and make your garden a space to be proud of."

For more information and for 60 years of garden inspiration, visit www.bradstone.com/60



Give houseplants a home and reap the rewards

By Hannah Stephenson

DOTTED around rooms, houseplants are pretty to look at and add colour and charm – but their credentials don't end there.

They're also known for a host of wellbeing-boosting benefits, and having them in your home could enhance your mood and physical health.

For one thing, they are terrific anti-pollutants, absorbing nasty chemicals such as formaldehyde, a known human carcinogen found in cleaning products, toilet paper, facial tissues and paper towels.

Indoor air pollution can also be emitted from furnishings, upholstery and synthetic building materials as well as pollen, bacteria, and moulds.

And that's not all. Here are eight ways houseplants can help bolster wellbeing...

1. They assist our breathing

Plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, making plants and people great partners. Plants help to increase oxygen levels, and our bodies appreciate that.

2. They clean the air

NASA notes that "plants improve the quality of indoor air". Ivy, geraniums, lavender and many ferns are good at absorbing formaldehyde, aloe vera not only cleans the air, but the gel inside helps relieve burns and cuts, and the spider plant battles benzene, commonly found in glue, paint and detergent, as well as formaldehyde and carbon monoxide.

3. They help deter illness

Using plants indoors decreases the incidence of dry skin, colds, sore throats and dry coughs, studies at the Agricultural University of Norway found. Plants can also help to reduce headaches because they help eliminate stuffy air; homes with many indoor plants can even help reduce high blood pressure.

4. They boost healing

Why do we take plants and flowers to people in hospital? Because they make them feel good. Studies have shown that looking after plants can actually increase your healing time. Texas A&M University tasked patients with taking care of plants, and those who physically interacted with plants experienced a significantly reduced recovery time after medical procedures.

5. They improve your memory

Studies show that working in the presence of plants improves your concentration, productivity and memory. Being "under the influence of plants" can increase memory retention up to 20 per cent, according to research by the University of Michigan.

6. They increase workplace satisfaction

A recent 'Green versus Lean' report, conducted by Exeter and Cardiff universities, revealed that introducing plants into the office lifts workplace satisfaction by up to 40%.

7. They make you feel needed

Having plants to love and nurture gives us something to take care of, which can enrich our lives. If you buy a flowering plant that currently has no buds on it, you can



Adding houseplants to your home can help with a range of health issues, from breathing to lowering blood pressure



Greenery on your desk is said to raise workplace satisfaction



Nurturing plants can improve your own wellbeing

make a goal of giving it care and attention with fertiliser and water so that it can grow flowers.

8. They make you happier

Workers with greenery on their desks rate themselves more cheerful and productive, researchers have found.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

1. Leave old flowers on some hellebores like H. niger and H. orientalis to allow them to self-seed
2. Lift and divide primulas, polyanthus and forget-me-nots
3. Give acid lovers like azaleas and rho-

dodendrons a feed to stop leaves turning yellow

4. Give conifers and perennials a feed by applying fertilizer around the base of plants
5. Continue to sow mangetout peas
6. Complete planting of maincrop potatoes

Neighbours held drug farm gardener

A VIETNAMESE man was caught growing 252 cannabis plants at a house in Cradley Heath by neighbours who called police, a court heard.

People living in Northgate grew suspicious that Thuy Huang, 44, was operating a drug farm in a rented four-bedroom house.

They called police and while waiting held Huang under citizen's arrest.

Police found the plants and growing equipment in the bedrooms and loft.

Huang has been recruited as the 'gardener', Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Alerted

Prosecutor Kevin Jones said: "Police attended a property in Northgate, Cradley Heath, on May 15 this year after being alerted by neighbours who were concerned that there could be a cannabis farm."

They found the defendant being held by neighbours outside the property.

Simon Hanns, defending, said: "We've seen cases similar to this before, where people from Vietnam are trying to make money to send back home to their families."

Huang admitted producing cannabis with intent of supplying and was jailed for eight months. He is expected to be deported on release.

Help for refugees as fund supports project

THE Brushstrokes Community Project, which supports refugees in Sandwell and West Birmingham, has won funding from the Heart of England's New Beginnings fund.

The money will provide an information and guidance service, called the New Hope Project, for vulnerable refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and trafficked women. People will be able to seek advice on a wide range of topics. Visit brushstrokesandwell.org.uk.

Firefighters are now facing extra shifts after cutbacks

Active Brenda celebrates centenary



Brenda Twiby, centre with, back, Heather, Les and Mick Wright, front left, Margaret and Julie

A STOURBRIDGE woman celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by friends and family.

Brenda Twiby was joined by her two sons, Mike and Les Wright, to mark her landmark birthday. Mick's wife Margaret, Les' partner Julie Townsend and granddaughter Heather Wright joined the celebration at her home in Amblecote.

Mick said: "She's a wonderful woman who has always led an active life. I think her old age can be put down to her not only being active but keeping her brain busy."

Brenda was born in Duncombe Street, Wollaston, on June 13, 1916. Father, Edward Hawkeswood, ran an outfitters in Stourbridge. Her mother, Winnie, was a teacher.

She had four siblings who have since died. She worked as a secretary at Webb Corbett in Amblecote until 1938. Before the war she married Norman Knight, a motor mechanic, living in Stourbridge.

Norman died in 1972. A number of years later Mrs Twiby married Sydney Morgan and was widowed again before marrying Eric Twiby.

FIREFIGHTERS in the West Midlands will take on extra shifts to keep the service running smoothly following heavy government cuts, it has been announced.

West Midlands Fire Authority and the Fire Brigade Union have agreed to allow 'willing' firefighters to volunteer to take on extra paid shifts outside normal working hours.

West Midlands Fire Authority chairman John Edwards said the changes would help 'keep fire engines running and stations open' but described the cuts as 'appalling'.

He estimated that by 2020 West Midlands Fire Service would lose 46 per cent of Government funding, equal to £38 million.

Extended shifts have been announced following a dispute between the union and fire authority over cuts at West Midlands Fire Service.

Deaths

Firefighters were recently balloted over the additional shifts, which will be paid at a flat time rate with an extra 25 per cent for 'disturbances'.

Mr Edwards said: "Fire deaths rose by 21 per cent nationally last year, coinciding with the longest response times in 20 years and five years of unprecedented cuts to fire services. The cuts are absolutely appalling."

"There is clearly a connection between the speed of response times and the damage caused by fires. The additional shifts agreed upon will help West Midlands Fire Service to respond to category one incidents with an attendance time of four minutes and 38 seconds, which given the circumstances is staggering and unique in England. We have the quickest response times in the country."

"The extra shifts will allow us to keep fire engines running and 38 stations in the region open. They are for firefighters who want to volunteer for them. They won't be forced."

Car overturns in accident on a busy route

A DRIVER was lucky to escape injury when a car overturned after hitting a tree and a parked vehicle in Quinton last week.

The crash occurred on West Boulevard in Quinton at around 6.30am last Thursday.

Early commuters experienced delays as the road was closed for nearly 45 minutes.

Fire crews from Woodgate Valley and Bournbrook attended the accident to clear the road.

A West Midlands Fire Service spokesman said: "One car was in collision with a tree and then one other vehicle. It came to rest on its roof on the roadway."

"The driver was out before we got there and suffered no injuries."

"We had to put our cutting gear into use to clear the vehicle from the roadway so that it could be reopened."

Woodgate Valley Fire tweeted: "Blue Watch out to RTC, driver lucky not to receive serious injuries after hitting a tree before a car."



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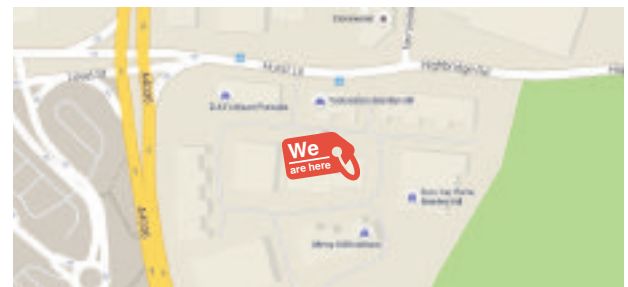
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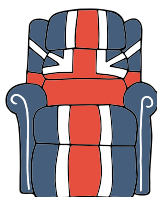
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Even cushions have a place in the 'boy zone' with seating a priority



Men are taking more control of home decor, with plenty of products on the market

Men: Make a stand and muscle in on the decor

By Gabrielle Fagan

THE days of men having no say on the home style front are long gone.

Move over decor divas – men are muscling in on interiors and creating impressive temples of style. While they were once seen only as DIY-ers, who wouldn't be seen dead dithering over Elephant's Breath or Downpipe (paint shades, in case you're wondering), blokes are now exploring their taste, and becoming as fussy about their homes as they are their cars and clothes.

"Men have grown in confidence about expressing their personal style and being aware of trends. They're becoming just as savvy about interiors, knowledgeable about furniture designers and specific about a look they want to live with," says Benjamin Hanley, who works at contemporary furniture specialists, West Elm.

"We're seeing them buying into mid-century and industrial styles. These have quite masculine, structural aesthetics, which offer big impact.

"We encourage them to select a statement piece of furniture they love as a starting point, and then build around that, so their look can grow and emerge.

"A sleek, sophisticated pared-back look, with a colour palette at the darker end of the spectrum, is currently the most popular."

Here's how to create the ultimate man-zone...

MALE TERRITORY
"A home needs to be a sanctuary for modern-day men, it's a place to show off personal style. While the basic ingredients were once leather, shagpile carpets and lava lamps, today's reality is about a classy yet comfortable space, which makes the most of minimalism and shows off gadgetry," says Anna Gillespie, guest editor at Anglian Home Improvements.

"My advice would be steer clear of a boring black and grey colour scheme and opt for lighter neutral shades, such as cream and white, and then add on-trend bursts of bright colours – racing car red or green, or even emerald green and bright blue."

TIP: Lighting can transform mood and atmosphere.

GAME OF THRONES

You're the boss at home, so choose a 'hot' seat which combines cutting-edge style with comfort.

"Seating's key and a sofa, usually the largest piece in a living room, should be in harmony with the overall decor scheme," says Rebecca Snowden, interior style advisor at Furnica Choice.

"The industrial trend is particularly male-friendly as it creates an air of relaxed informality and relies on colour and texture in natural materials, rather than fussy detail."

"Choose chunky, leather sofas or a Chesterfield – a 'gentlemen's club' classic.

"Other characteristic ingredients are ex-



Framed artwork gives a more sophisticated look than posters on the walls, which hark back to student days



Plenty of storage is essential for all those bits and bobs



Make a statement with striking items that catch the eye

posed concrete floors or polished concrete walls, brickwork, ladder shelving and metal lighting fixtures.

"The advantage of this urban-luxe style is that new pieces can be added over time.

"Mismatching is fine and won't jar, because the whole look should have an eclectic feel."

TIP: No bachelor pad's complete without high-spec media kit and gadgets. Create an 'entertainment hub'.

GET DOWN & DETAILED

Fuss and frills have no place in any self-respecting male's zone, but cool, covetable pieces do and they'll ramp up your design credentials.

"In the past, a man's priority for furniture and interior choices was largely practicality, but the finer points of design, aesthetics and craftsmanship are now regarded equally important," says Claire Hornby, creative and display manager

at Barker & Stonehouse. "The truly design-savvy are confident enough to opt for bold choices - and allow them to star in a room; maybe a brightly coloured sofa or a distinctive reclaimed wooden table."

TIP: Don't overlook framed art – posters stuck on a wall just harks back to student days.

Create a display of your favourite pictures with matching frames in an assortment of sizes.

Stay safe with BBQ tips from Ciindy...

AS the temperature warms up and we dare to believe we may see summer this year, thousands of people will be getting out the barbecues to enjoy freshly cooked food with friends and family.

Yet having a real fire in an open space can be dangerous if it's not managed properly and cause lasting damage.

Here are AskCiindy.com's top tips for enjoying a barbecue safely:

1. Never leave a lit barbecue unattended. Its common sense but it's easy to get distracted when you socialising and relaxing with friends and family.

2. Make sure that your barbecue is on level ground and is well away from sheds, fences, trees, shrubs or garden waste.

3. Keep a bucket of water, sand or a garden hose nearby so that you can quickly deal with any emergencies.

4. Keep children, garden games and pets well away from the cooking area.

5. Make sure your barbecue is in good working order and follow the safety instructions provided with the barbecue when you use it.

6. If you are using charcoal, use only enough to cover the base of the barbecue to a depth of about 5cm (2 inches). Only use fire lighters or starter fuel to light it, never use petrol.

7. If you are using gas, make sure the tap is turned off before changing the gas cylinder. Change cylinders in a well ventilated area, its best to do this outside if possible. When you have finished cooking, turn the gas cylinder off before turning off at the controls to ensure any gas in the pipe work is used up.

8. Make sure the barbecue is cool before trying to move it.

9. When you empty out the ashes, empty them onto bare garden soil, not into dustbins or wheelie bins. If they're hot, they can melt the plastic and cause a fire.

10. No matter what the weather throws at you, never move a lit barbecue inside as this is a huge safety risk.

David Ross, director of communications at AskCiindy.com said: "It's so rare that we get a day where it is warm enough to eat outside that most of us grab the first chance we can to get the grill out.

Damage

"Barbecues are a great way to bring friends and family together and when they are done properly they can be a lot of fun for all involved.

"There are tens of thousands of fires started in bins each year, some of which are due to barbecue ashes not being disposed of properly.

"Insurers often see claims for fires starting in bins, which if left next to a house can cause devastating damage. By using your common sense and making sure you barbecue safely, everyone can relax and enjoy themselves. Now, we just need the weather to cooperate!"

"Ciindy" is an online character to help people with any questions they have about insurance.

Institute (CII) to guide consumers through the world of insurance.

Consumers can see Ciindy at www.AskCiindy.com, ask questions about insurance and view free online guides.

Ciindy explains the jargon of how insurance works, and helps people understand different insurance policies.

For more information visit: www.AskCiindy.com

OUTDOOR FUN

Keep youngsters amused in the garden with some outdoor toys and activities. Here's some of the newest products to the market:

Garden Games Jumbo Hi-Tower

Kids can stack 58 wooden blocks to build the highest tower they can, to a maximum height of 1.5m, and take turns to remove pieces without making the tower tumble. Suitable from six years. £29.99, www.amazon.co.uk

My Vegetable Patch Kit

Get your little gardener growing with this kit, which includes three pots, a tray, compost and carrot, radish and lettuce seeds. Suitable from six years. £16, www.nhmshop.co.uk

Little Tikes Go Green Playhouse

A playhouse to help teach youngsters about the environment, with eco-friendly features including a solar light, working pump sink, recycling centre, water reservoir and flower garden. Suitable from 2-8 years. £269.99, www.littletikes.co.uk



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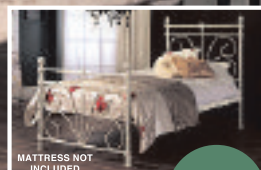
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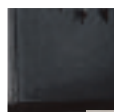


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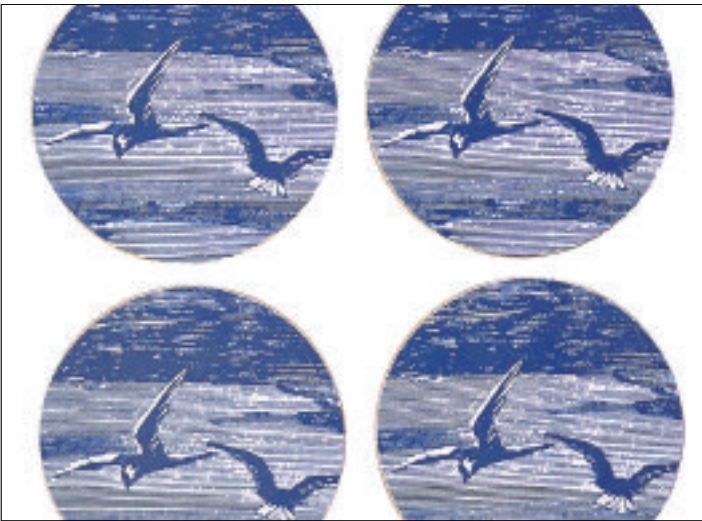
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The Linea Regatta fish design range, all available from House of Fraser



Sky coasters, set of four, £16, available from Barnabyco.com

Enjoy your summer dining treat with a taste of style

By Gabrielle Fagan

EATING al fresco is always a summer treat. Gabrielle Fagan dishes up three mouth-watering looks, so you can set the scene in style, whatever the weather.

It's the time of year when we Brits prepare to demonstrate our bravery, as we brace ourselves – no matter what the weather throws at us – to dine al fresco.

Ready to battle with the barbecue and wrestle unwieldy picnic tables, folding chairs and wobbly parasols?

You betcha – because nothing will deter us from enjoying that heady combination of good food and fresh air. Indeed, a recent survey by Karcher saw 80 per cent of respondents state they'll persevere with plans for dining outdoors, regardless of showers or storms.

Nature, of course, may be beyond our control, but there's no excuse for a shabby table setting, as designers have transformed picnicware – once the poor relation of tableware – with stunning designs that make them suitable for use indoors and outdoors all year round.

So even if the skies let you down, at least make sure your setting is a feast for the eyes.

We've grilled the foodie experts for their top tips.

Pretty floral patterns in soft shades conjure a country garden look, while bright blooms can evoke a sunny Mediterranean scene.

"You can't beat an al fresco meal in a beautiful country garden. When my husband and I first started living together, I made a feast in our garden and got a violinist to come and play his favourite classical music. It was a pretty special date night," says Natasha Corrett, 33, creator of the Honestly Healthy foodie website, and author of *Honestly Healthy In A Hurry* (Hodder & Stoughton, £25).

"I keep food as simple as possible, with dishes such as Middle Eastern sweet potato salad, wild rice citrus and roasted radish salad, and beetroot burgers," she explains.

As for the settings: "I like a casual, informal look, with cutlery in kilner jars, so people can help themselves. My favourite tablecloth is white, with 'Healthy' hand-painted in huge green letters, (£375) from Summerill & Bishop."

Marks & Spencer has a super range of melamine tableware to suit a traditional country garden tea party. Choose from the flower-scattered Spring Bloom designs, or the delicately patterned pink and white Rosalie collection, with side plates from £6 each. For a romantic occasion, a Spring Bloom 2 Person Wicker Heart Hamper, including plates, wine glasses, cutlery and table accessories, is a steal at £45. Their vibrant Peru melamine floral range is also a real winner: salad bowl, £8; side plate, £3; round tray, £15.

My favourite collection is Collier Campbell's Flowerdrop melamine range, featuring retro-style blooms on a white and aqua



Garden Shades paints, including Iris Blue and Forget Me Not, £23.49 for 2.5 litres, by Cuprinol enhance an outdoor setting



La Selva tableware available from John Lewis

background: dinner plate £7; side plate, £6, bowl, £6, tumbler, £5. And for a luxury touch, consider a ribbed leaf bowl, with matt nickel finish, £33, In-Spaces.

Blues are peaceful colours, conjuring sunny skies, glittering seas and lakes – which will raise cheer even if the weather isn't co-operating!

"Nature offers what the indoors can't – natural beauty. I love the combination of water and a lush green landscape, so being beside a lake, an ocean, a river or a pond is my perfect setting for a picnic meal," says New Zealand-born chef Peter Gordon, author of *Savour: Salads For All Seasons* (Jacqui Small, £25).

"My most memorable al fresco meal was cooking and eating freshly caught seafood and summer fruits on a boat jetty at beauty spot and wildlife haven Waterfall Bay, in Marlborough Sounds, New Zealand. Everything was perfect, from the weather to the food; I thought I'd died and gone to heaven."

"I favour a rustic look for a table, with a plain white linen tablecloth, candles even during the day, and definitely chairs with backs, even if they're canvas, because comfort is all."



Flowerdrop Melamine range from Collier Campbell

Painting walls, fences and furniture in blue shades will set the scene, and Cuprinol's Garden Shades range includes some beautiful blues, such as Iris and Forget-Me-Not, £23.49 for 2.5L.

Talking Tables makes creating stunning settings easy, and their Coastal collection is well-priced and attractive. A stripe or spot design bone china mug, £8.50; melamine plate, £5.50, and paper lanterns, £10 for pack of three.

House of Fraser's Linea Home range has an appropriate seaside-inspired Regatta collection.

Cupboard culprits can damage your health

AS a new report links eating potatoes with a raised risk of high blood pressure, Kate Whiting reveals some other kitchen cupboard culprits

The humble spud looks innocent enough, but recent research has found they could be contributing to the nation's high blood pressure.

Eating four or more servings of mash, baked or boiled potatoes each week has been linked to an 11 per cent increased risk of high blood pressure in women.

Those figures are according to a new study published in the *British Medical Journal*.

And, perhaps less surprisingly, it's even worse news for chip fans.

Four or more servings of French fries per week has been associated with a 17 per cent greater risk of the condition, which is known to be a leading cause of stroke.

It's thought the high glycaemic index (GI) of potatoes could be playing a part.

This is due to the fact that when you eat high GI foods, energy is released fast.

And that means blood sugar soars more quickly as a result.

The team behind the study, from the Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, said high-GI meals had been associated with dysfunction of cells in the body, oxidative stress and inflammation.

These are all potentially important mechanisms in the development of hypertension the medical term for high blood pressure said.

However, potatoes aren't all bad.

Tom Sanders, emeritus professor of nutrition and dietetics at King's College London, said: "Potatoes make an important contribution to the intake of vitamin C and potassium."

"The vitamin C and potassium content is best retained when the potatoes are baked or boiled with skins on."

And it's important to remember this doesn't change the fact that we already know one of the biggest risk factors for high blood pressure is salt consumption – whether that's 'hidden' in processed foods, or added to meals.

Often dubbed a 'silent killer' – because it doesn't usually cause symptoms, but can lead to major complications if untreated, including heart disease – one in three UK adults has high blood pressure.

Concerned that your diet could be raising your chances of developing hypertension?

Here are four other foods you might want to keep an eye on...



Tinned soup

One of the best comfort foods known to mankind, whole armies of students have survived on them.

They're a store cupboard essential for rainy days when you can't be bothered to cook.

But, they're often packed

with hidden salt, with a whole tin containing as much as 2,225mg of sodium.

That is a third of the Government-recommended maximum daily intake of 6g.

Check labels before you buy, or make your own with a low-salt stock cube.

Pickled cucumbers

These and their onion brethren are absolutely steeped in salt – as are all preserved veggies. Salt stops them going bad.

But the veggies are like sponges and the longer they sit in preserving liquids, the more salt they soak up, with 100g of gherkin containing as much as 1,200mg. Keep them for a treat on the cheese board at Christmas.

Chinese takeaway

Ever wondered why they're so tasty and addictive? Because the sauces in Chinese takeaways are laden with salt.

Nutritionists estimate an innocent-sounding beef with broccoli dish can have as much as 3,752 mg sodium, while a tablespoon of soya sauce can contain 1,000mg.

Tomato juice

No Bloody Mary is complete without it, but tomato juice, along with processed tomato pasta sauces and tinned tomatoes, is another salt-filled culprit.

A cup of tomato juice can contain 650mg of sodium. So it might be a good idea to look for low-salt alternatives instead.

Solicitors still branching out

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

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Jordans was established in Blackheath by John Jordan in 1990. Over the last five years we have trebled in size resulting in opening a second branch in Halesowen and we have three distinct departments, each headed by a specialist in that area.



Wills and Probate

For the majority of people, making a will is a simple and low cost piece of legal work. On the other hand, the cost of sorting out the mess left when someone dies without a will, with an out of date will or with a badly drafted will can be massive. It only takes an hour or so to make a will and it can save your loved ones hours of heartache and sometimes thousands of pounds.



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Michael Jordan LLB

Michael has been with the firm since 2006 when he joined as a trainee. He is now Managing Director specialising in Residential and Commercial Property.



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Brinder Khara LLB

Brinder is an Accredited Family Solicitor and has been practising in the area of Family Law since 1996. She is also a Notary Public.

Other members of the team include Rikki Bateman and Emma Hingley.

Rikki is a Qualified Solicitor specialising in Residential Property. He is vastly experienced in all aspects of buying and selling, including New Builds and Help to Buy Schemes.

Emma has joined us from a local Estate Agents. She brings a wealth of experience, which will further improve the process of Buying or selling a property for our clients and make it a smoother and less stressful process.

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Organised by The River Cruise Line,
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As the summer sun sets over the Rhine Valley, one of Germany's great festivals gets underway which bathes this beautiful region in an explosion of colour and light. It's the legendary Rhine in Flames and it's nothing short of spectacular!

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Also on the itinerary is a visit to the city of Mainz, at the confluence of the Rhine and main rivers, then travelling back through the Rhine Gorge and around the Lorelei Rock a stop is made at Boppard, before the ship takes up position as part of the Flotilla, for the highlight of the holiday — the Rhine in Flames festival.

Nowhere is there a more extraordinary display of fire, water and light, as a fusion of sounds echo around the valley and a blaze of colours light up the night sky.

Optional excursions are also available to book to make the most of the holiday. These include a cable car ride in Koblenz offering breathtaking views across the region and a Volcano Express tour at Andernach, which takes a scenic railway journey climbing up the Eifel Mountains.

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- ✓ Services of a tour manager
- ✓ Single rooms subject to availability (supplement applies)

* Please note the Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon and sightings cannot be guaranteed

Organised by Newmarket Holidays (ABTA V7812, ATOL 2325)



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- ✓ Visit to Seville
- ✓ Optional excursions offered
- ✓ Services of a tour manager
- ✓ Single rooms subject to availability (supplement applies)

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Andalucia is one of the most beautiful corners of Europe, yet its undiscovered by the majority.

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- ✓ Return flights
- ✓ Six nights bed and breakfast accommodation
- ✓ Guided tours of Seville and Granada's Alhambra Palace
- ✓ Visit to Cordoba with a guided tour of the Mezquita
- ✓ Visit to Ronda
- ✓ Services of a tour manager
- ✓ Single rooms subject to availability (supplement applies)

Please note some entrance fees are payable locally

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DAYS: 7 DEPARTS: Various dates

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DAYS: 7 DEPARTS: AUGUST 9

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fast the ticket

Here we go again!

**Mamma Mia
hits stage**
See Page 23



Gold-en

See Page 22



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Express & Star



9th-16th July The 39 Steps by Patrick Barlow

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www.oldburyrep.org

Goldie



Saturday, 9.30pm
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
Gig of the week sees the Black Country's drum 'n' bass supremo, this year given an MBE for services to young people and music, in Brum for a late night show.
Visit hareandhoundskingsheath.co.uk

John Bramwell



Thursday (30th), 7.30pm
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
A solo gig by the Mancunian singer-songwriter from acclaimed trio I Am Kloot, as endorsed by friend and producer Guy Garvey of Elbow. Dave Fidler supports.
See hareandhoundskingsheath.co.uk

Swap!



Tuesday to Saturday, 2.30pm/7.30pm
Grand Theatre, W'ton
Return of the Saint actor Ian Ogilvy has written and directed this comedy set on the Costa Del Crime, featuring David Callister from The Bill.
Visit grandtheatre.co.uk

Grimes



Friday, 6pm
O2 Academy, B'ham
Rearranged date for maverick Canadian synth pop singer-songwriter Claire Elise Boucher, better known as Grimes, who has hit the big time with her fourth studio album Art Angels.
See academymusicgroup.com

POP

D-ran D-ran: Duran Duran Tribute
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

Grimes
Tonight at 6pm - 10pm,
O2 Academy Birmingham,
B1 1DB.
Call 0121 622 8250

Dexys Bootleg Runners: Dexys Midnight Runners Tribute
Tonight at 7pm,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Big Girls Don't Cry: A Tribute To Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons
Tonight at 7.30pm,
Palace Theatre, Redditch,
B98 8AE.
Call 01527 65203

The Sounds Of Simon: A Tribute To Simon And Garfunkel
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
The Rose Theatre, Broadwaters,
Kidderminster, DY10 2RX.
Call 01562 743745

Never 42: Level 42 Tribute
Wed at 7.30pm,
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
SY3 8FT.
Call 01743 281281

Navi: Michael Jackson Tribute
Tonight at 7.30pm,
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

ROCK & METAL

The Machine Rages On
Sun at 7pm,
The RoadHouse Birmingham,
Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

The Elvis Years: Elvis Tribute
Tonight at 7.30pm,
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
SY3 8FT.
Call 01743 281281

Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
Genting Arena, Birmingham,
B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Korn Again And Stiff Bizkit
Tomorrow at 7pm,
The RoadHouse Birmingham,
Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

John Bramwell
Thu at 7.30pm,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Whitesnake UK: Tribute
Tonight at 7pm, £10 - £12
The Slade Rooms,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1RQ.
Call 0870 320 7000

Gary Mullen: Queen Tribute
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
Prince Of Wales Centre,
Cannock, WS11 1DE.
Call 01543 578762

Kirvana: A Tribute To Nirvana
Tomorrow at 7pm,
The Slade Rooms,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1RQ.
Call 0870 320 7000

Jeff Lynne's ELO
Tonight at 7pm,
Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham,
B1 2AA.
Call 0121 780 4141

Cliff & The Shadz: Cliff Richards And The Shadows Tribute
Sun at 8.30pm, £10 - £12
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

Fleetwood Bac: Fleetwood Mac Tribute
Tonight at 7pm, £8 - £16
The RoadHouse Birmingham,
Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
Call 0121 246 2273

JAZZ, SOUL, FUNK, BLUES & MOTOWN

Jazzlines Free Gigs: Didier
Tonight at 5pm,
Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

Chantel McGregor
Wed at 7.30pm,
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

Motown Party Night: The Commitments
Tomorrow at 7pm,
Oakengates Theatre, Telford,
TF2 6EP.
Call 01952 382382

Kenny G
Tue at 7.30pm,
Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

George Benson
Mon at 7.30pm,
Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

COUNTRY, FOLK & ACOUSTIC

Fotheringay
Tue at 7.30pm,
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

HIP HOP, RAP & RNB

Brandy
Tomorrow at 7pm - 11pm,
O2 Academy Birmingham,
B1 1DB.
Call 0121 622 8250

Saul Williams
Tonight at 6pm - 10pm,
The Institute, Digbeth,
Birmingham, B5 6DY.
Call 0121 643 0428

CLASSICAL

Tcha Limberger's Kalotaszeg Trio
Thu at 8pm,
mac, Birmingham,
B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra
Sun at 3pm,
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
SY3 8FT.
Call 01743 281281

Commonwealth Cultural Extravaganza In Honour Of HM The Queen's 90th Birthday
Tomorrow at 7pm,
Birmingham Town Hall, B3 3DQ.
Call 0121 780 3333

The Sons Of Pitches
Sun at 7.30pm - 10pm,
Birmingham Town Hall, B3 3DQ.
Call 0121 780 3333

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra - The Planets: An HD Odyssey
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
B1 2EA.
Call 0121 780 3333

CLUBBING

Propaganda
Tonight - tomorrow at 10.30pm - 3.30am,
O2 Academy Birmingham,
B1 1DB.
Call 0121 622 8250

Tronika Pres: Dark Chambers
Tomorrow - Sun at 10pm - 3am,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham,
B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Goldie
Tomorrow at 9.30pm - 3am,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

COMEDY

Matt Hale: 100% Chicken Free
Tue at 7.30pm,
mac, Birmingham,
B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232
Sara Pascoe: Animal

Sun at 7.30pm,
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
SY3 8FT. Call 01743 281281

Thursday Night Comedy Carousel
Thu at 8pm,
The Glee Club, Birmingham,
B5 4TD. Call 0871 472 0400

The Best In Live Stand-up Comedy
Tonight at 8.15pm, Tomorrow at 8.15pm,
The Glee Club, Birmingham,
B5 4TD. Call 0871 472 0400

EdinBrum Previews: Will Franken & David Trent
Thu at 7.30pm,
mac, Birmingham, B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

Rough Works: New Material Night
Sun at 7pm,
The Glee Club, Birmingham,
B5 4TD. Call 0871 472 0400

Comedy Club
Sun at 7pm,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Comedy In The Met
Tomorrow at 8pm,
Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
ST16 2LT. Call 01785 254653

OTHER EVENTS

The Autism Show
Tomorrow at 10am - 4.30pm,
The NEC Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Kings Heath Food Assembly
Tue at 7.30pm - 9pm,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Sports Show
Tomorrow - Sun,
The NEC Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Birmingham Royal Ballet: Class On Stage
Tomorrow at 11.45am, £10
Birmingham Hippodrome,
B5 4TB.
Call 0844 338 5000

Paint Your Own Miniature
Tomorrow at 11am - 4pm,
Barber Institute of Fine Arts,
University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston, B15 2TS.
Call 0121 414 7333

THEATRE

Birmingham Royal Ballet: The Moor's Pavane/The Shakespeare Suite/The Sonnets
Thu at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 2.30pm, 7.30pm, £10 - £26
Birmingham Hippodrome,
B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000
Gangsta Granny

Tue at 10am, 1.30pm, Wed at 10am, 1.30pm, Thu at 10am, 1.30pm,
New Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham, B5 4DS.
Call 0844 871 3011

A Variety Performance In Aid Of BChC
Sun at 7.15pm,
New Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham, B5 4DS.
Call 0844 871 3011

HLC Dance Fest 2016
Tue at 7pm,
Oakengates Theatre, Telford,
TF2 6EP.
Call 01952 382382

Macbeth
Wed at 7.30pm,
Oakengates Theatre, Telford,
TF2 6EP.
Call 01952 382382

Rehearsal For Murder
Mon at 7.30pm, Tue at 7.30pm,
Wed at 2.30pm, 7.30pm, Thu at 7.30pm,
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
SY3 8FT.
Call 01743 281281

Swap!
Tue at 7.30pm, Wed at 2.30pm, 7.30pm, Thu at 7.30pm,
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
WV1 1DE.
Call 01902 573320

Chicago
Tonight at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
WV1 1DE.
Call 01902 573320

Birmingham Royal Ballet: Shakespeare Triple Bill
Tonight at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 2.30pm, 7.30pm,
Birmingham Hippodrome,
B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

Be Festival 2016
Tonight at 7pm, Tomorrow at 7pm,
Birmingham Repertory Theatre,
B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

Mamma Mia
Tue at 7.30pm - 10pm, Wed at 2.30pm - 5.30pm, 7.30pm - 10pm, Thu at 7.30pm - 10pm,
£28 - £60
Birmingham Hippodrome,
B5 4TB. Call 0844 338 5000

Summer Dreaming
Tonight at 7.30pm,
Oakengates Theatre, Telford,
TF2 6EP.
Call 01952 382382

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Oh Mamma Mia! It's a blockbuster

WEST End and movie hit **Mamma Mia!** is coming to Birmingham as part of its first UK tour.

The tale of family, friendship and romance on a Greek island, with an unbeatable soundtrack of ABBA hits, will bring sunshine and smiles to the city all summer as on Tuesday it starts a run that lasts until September 3.

To date, the blockbuster show has been seen by more than 54 million people in 49 productions in 14 different languages.

Meanwhile, **Mamma Mia!** The Movie is the highest worldwide grossing live-action musical film of all time with one in four UK households owning the DVD, Amazon UK's biggest selling DVD ever.

Wedding

From West End to global phenomenon, **Mamma Mia!** is one of only five musicals to have run for more than 10 years both on Broadway and in the West End.

Five years ago it became the first Western musical to be staged in Mandarin in the People's Republic of China.

Mamma Mia! tells the story of Sophie, a 20-year-old girl who has been brought up by her mother on a Greek Island. With her wedding fast approaching, she trawls through her mother's diaries to find out who her father is, in the hope she can invite him to the wedding to walk her down the aisle.

But Sophie gets more than she bar-



Dancing queens – Emma Clifford, Sara Poyzer and Jacqueline Braun in a scene from the touring production of **Mamma Mia!** Photo: Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

gains for when she discovers there are three potential fathers and then they all arrive on the island that they last visited 20 years before, much to her mother Donna's surprise.

With music & lyrics by Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus, **Mamma Mia!** is written by Catherine Johnson,

directed by Phyllida Lloyd and choreographed by Anthony Van Laast.

Lucy May Barker stars as Sophie Sheridan with Sara Poyzer as her mother Donna Sheridan.

For tickets see www.birminghamhippodrome.com or call 0844 338 5000.

Gangsta Gran rides again

THE play version of David Walliams' hit children's book **Gangsta Granny** returns to Birmingham next week.

Following a successful run in December, the story about a granny and grandson's plot to steal the Crown Jewels is being staged at the New Alexandra Theatre from Monday to Saturday.

The production by the city's own Birmingham Stage Company, acclaimed producers of the **Horrible Histories** plays, was a family favourite hit with audiences.

Walliams, who is one of the judges on the popular Britain's Got Talent TV show, creator of the ground-breaking comedy series **Little Britain** and star of the recent BBC TV Agatha Christie series **Partners in Crime**, has now also become the best-selling author for children in the country and **Gangsta Granny** is his most popular book.

He began his publishing career in 2008 with his debut novel **The Boy in the Dress**. Then, after two other popular stories, in 2011 **Gangsta Granny** was shortlisted for both The Red House Children's Book Award and for the Roald Dahl Funny Prize.

At Christmas 2013 a TV version of **Gangsta Granny** was shown on BBC One with an all-star cast, including David Walliams himself.

Gangsta Granny went straight to number one in the children's book charts and his books have been translated into no fewer than 30 languages.

David Walliams said: "It's the most popular of all my books and I am sure this production by the brilliant Birmingham Stage Company will delight not just children but their parents and, of course, grandparents".



'It's the most popular of all my books'

Children's choirs in Romany Wood

MASSED choirs from primary and preparatory schools across Birmingham will be joining forces for a performance of **Romany Wood** at the city's Symphony Hall at 6pm tomorrow (Friday).

The 40-minute musical created especially for children by David Gauckroger and David Carr is being performed to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The young voices will be joined by the King Edward's School and King Edward VI High School for Girls' Symphony Orchestra.

Tickets cost £5 or £8 for the concert which also features Shostakovich's Festive Overture. See the thsh.co.uk website.

Rock legend Ritchie in one-off UK gig

FANS of classic rock will be heading to the NEC's Genting Arena on Saturday night for a one-off UK show by Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow.

One of only three European shows, it will see guitarist Blackmore and his band performing anthems by Rainbow and his first major group Deep Purple. The line-up also includes Lords Of Black singer Ronnie Romero, Stratovarius keyboardist Jens Johansson, Bob Nouveau on bass and David Keith drums. Support from Mostly Autumn.

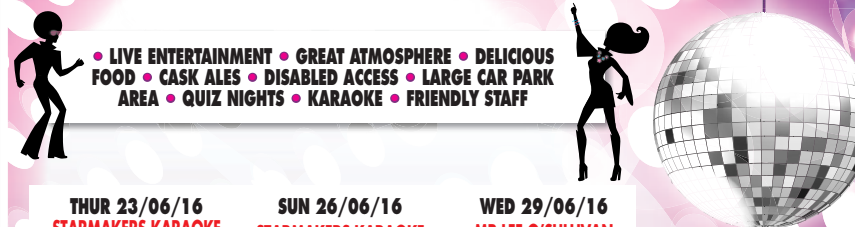
Texas boogie rock legends ZZ Top have a sold out gig at Birmingham's O2 Academy tonight (Thursday).

Back to 60s folk at Bilston venue

BLACK Country fans of 1960s British folk-rock are in for a treat with three giants of the genre visiting Bilston's Robin 2 venue next week.

On Tuesday it hosts the re-united Fotheringay featuring original members Jerry Donohue, Gerry Conway and Pat Donaldson with singers, Kathryn Roberts and The Voice's Sally Barker, with songs performed by the late Sandy Denny. Then Jacqui McShee brings 60s folk-jazz favourites Pentangle to the Robin on Thursday, June 30, with support from Magna Carta featuring prog rock-folk veteran Chris Simpson. See therobin.co.uk website.

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CHOICE



Derek Thompson

Casualty (BBC1, 9.25pm)
In the 1000th episode of the medical drama, Elle prepares for a busy night shift, but finds her colleagues still resent her for Charlie's dismissal. She resolves to regain their trust, and takes on a particularly challenging case involving a pregnant woman who is refusing treatment that may be urgently needed to save her baby. Charlie is reunited with Duffy, who returns to Holby as an agency nurse, Iain panics as Rita tells everyone they have got back together, and romance blossoms between Glen and Robyn at the mortality cafe.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry's Absolute Favourites. (R) **12.00** BBC News; Weather. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **1.30** MOTD: Euro 2016 Live. Group A runner-up v Group C runner-up (Kick-off 2.00pm). Gary Lineker introduces coverage of the opening match of the last 16, from the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard in Saint-Etienne. Subsequent programmes subject to change. **4.00** Flog It! (R) **4.30** MOTD: Euro 2016 Live. Group B winner v third-place qualifier (Kick-off 5.00pm). Gary Lineker presents coverage of the second match of the last 16, held at the Parc des Princes in Paris. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

7.10 BBC News.
7.20 Regional Programme.
7.30 MOTD: Euro 2016 Live. Group D winner v third-place qualifier (Kick-off 8.00pm). Gary Lineker introduces coverage of the last-16 match, staged at the Stade Bollaert-Delais in Lens. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

10.05 The National Lottery Live. Kate Garraway presents as the all-important winning numbers are revealed. Plus, as voting begins for this year's National Lottery Awards, the show profiles some of the finalists.

10.15 BBC News. Weather.

10.35 Live at the Apollo. Leading performers on the stand-up circuit share their light-hearted views on modern life in this show recorded before a packed house at London's Hammersmith Apollo. (R) National Lottery Update.

11.20 Film: LA Confidential. (1997) Thriller set in the 1950s, with Russell Crowe, Guy Pearce and Kevin Spacey.

1.30 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.35** BBC News.

In the event of football not being shown the schedule may run as follows:
1.00 Escape To The Continent (R) **2.00** Flog It! (R) **3.00** Earth's Natural Wonders (R) **4.00** Now You See It (R) **4.30** FILM: Kung Fu Panda (PG/2008) **5.50** Can't Touch This 6. **40-7.10** Celebrity Mastermind (R) **7.30** Pointless Celebrities (R) **8.20** The National Lottery Live **8.30** The Musketeers **9.25-10.15** Casualty **10.35-11.20** MOTD: Euro 2016 Highlights

BBC2

6.20 Film: The Miracle of the Bells. (1948) Drama, starring Fred MacMurray and Frank Sinatra. **8.15 Film:** Carve Her Name with Pride. (1958) Fact-based Second World War drama, starring Virginia McKenna. **10.10** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.10** Natural World. (R) **12.00** Tom Kerridge's Best Ever Dishes. (R) **12.30** Talking Tennis. **1.15** Tennis from Eastbourne. The Aegon International. All the action from the final at Devonshire Park Lawn Tennis Club in Eastbourne, which was won by Belinda Bencic last year. **4.00** Glastonbury 2016. **5.15** Live Challenge Cup Rugby League. Wigan Warriors v Castleford Tigers (Kick-off 5.30pm).

7.30 Grand Tours of Scotland. Paul Merton visits places connected to poet Robert Burns, the man who made Ayrshire famous. His tour takes him from Alloway, following the Burns trail to Mauchline, before heading for the coast and discovering the delights of Bunting's, bathing and betting.

8.00 Glastonbury 2016. Jo Whalley and Greg James take over the evening's presenting duties at Worthy Farm in Somerset, taking up residence close to the Pyramid Stage to provide viewers with on-the-spot coverage of tonight's most anticipated performances. The pair also provide highlights from throughout the second day of the festival, including sets by Madness, The 1975 and The Last Shadow Puppets. Gemma Cairney, Martin Dougan and Clara Amfo are also on hand to share some of the best music from the rest of Glastonbury's many venues.

9.00 Glastonbury 2016. As excitement builds for this evening's roster of music, Lauren Laverne and Huw Stephens introduce highlights from sets by the likes of Tame Impala, who support this evening's big headline star, and Glasgow synth-pop stars Chvrches. All eyes are bound to be on the Pyramid Stage come 10.15pm, though, as Adele emerges for this evening's headline performance. Once the blue-eyed soul siren's performance concludes, coverage goes back to the BBC studio in the Park area, where Jo Whalley and Mark Radcliffe provide highlights from sets by James Bay and M83.

1.00 MOTD: Euro 2016 Match Replay. **2.40** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! **6.20** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.30** Dino Dan. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Sooty. (R) **7.15** Super 4. (R) **7.30** Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.45** Looped. (R) **8.00** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Weekend. **9.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.30** The Wine Show. **12.40** ITV News; Weather. **1.00** Euro 2016. Group A runner-up v Group C runner-up (Kick-off 2.00pm). Mark Pougatch presents coverage of the opening match of the last 16, from the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard in Saint-Etienne. Subsequent programmes subject to change. **4.00** Euro 2016. Group B winner v third-place qualifier (Kick-off 5.00pm).

7.00 Euro 2016. Group D winner v third-place qualifier (Kick-off 8.00pm). Mark Pougatch presents coverage of the last-16 match, staged at the Stade Bollaert-Delais in Lens. Reigning champions Spain entered the tournament as favourites to top Group D, despite failing to a surprise 1-0 defeat at home to Georgia in their final warm-up match before departing for France, which may have given Czech Republic, Turkey and Croatia enough belief that they could cause something of a surprise. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

10.15 ITV News; Weather. **10.30** Euro 2016 Highlights. The opening last-16 matches from France, which were staged at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard in Saint-Etienne, at the Stade de France in Paris and the Stade Bollaert-Delais in Lens.

11.30 Film: Carry On Don't Lose Your Head. (1966) Comedy spoof. **1.15** Jackpot247. **3.00** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

In the event of football not being shown the schedule may run as follows:
11.30 Rebound (R) **12.30** The Wine Show **1.30** Off their Rockers (R) **2.00** ITV News And Weather **2.19** ITV Weather **2.20** FILM: The Incredible Hulk (12/2008) **3.40** Tipping Point (R) **5.30** ITV News **5.45** ITV News And Weather **6.00** Catchphrase (R) **7.00** The Chase (R) **8.00** Midsummer Murders (R) **10.00** ITV News And Weather **10.14** ITV Weather **10.15** Euro 2016 Highlights **11.15** FILM: Carry On Don't Lose Your Head (PG/1966) **1.00-3.00** Jackpot247

CHANNEL 4

6.05 Salvage SOS. **6.30** Motor Sport: Mobil 1 The Grid. **7.00** Triathlon. **7.30** Motor Sport: Volkswagen Racing Cup. **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** The Morning Line. **10.00** Car SOS. (R) **11.00** The Superhumans Show. **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.55** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.00** Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Ascot. **4.30** A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun. **5.35** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It. (R) **6.30** Channel 4 News.

7.00 Gogglesprogs. In Shropshire, Toby, Sam and James share a love of video games, while in Neath Ashtan adores documentaries through his sister Darcie and cousin Cari both prefer the soaps. In this episode, the young TV viewers give their unique takes on Take Me Out, Countdown and Star Wars. (R)

8.00 Film: Life of Pi. (2012) A writer interviews a man about the extraordinary events of his life. He describes his childhood in India, living in the zoo run by his father, and how the family and their animals were forced to relocate to Canada when he was a teenager. However, during the sea voyage, the ship sank and he was left adrift in a small boat with a ferocious tiger. Ang Lee's adventure based on Yann Martel's novel, starring Suraj Sharma and Irrfan Khan. **10.30** Film: R.I.P.D. (2013) Premiere. A cop killed in the line of duty is recruited by a ghostly police force assigned to battle evil spirits. Fantasy adventure, starring Ryan Reynolds and Jeff Bridges.

12.30 Film: Blue Is the Warmest Colour. (2013) A teenage girl learns to develop her own outlook on life through her long relationship with an older woman. Romantic drama, with Lea Seydoux and Adele Exarchopoulos. **3.30** Holyoaks. Omnibus. John Paul realises he has missed Father's Day, while Myra falls down the stairs at the school. Nancy and Darren are determined to stop Maxine dating Adam. (R) **5.40** Kirstie's Vintage Gems. Kirstie Allsopp helps Iman and Heather Ahmed to decorate their new home with a vintage 1920s-inspired theme and highlights the perks of second-hand furniture. (R) **5.55** The King of Queens. Doug's bowling team has to win the next match. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **8.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **9.30** The Saturday Show Live. **11.40** Film: Star Trek: Insurrection. (1998) **1.40** Film: Columbo: The Conspiracy. (1978) Detective drama, starring Peter Falk. **3.40** Film: Columbo: Playback. (1975) Crime drama, with Peter Falk. **5.10** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R)

6.10 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Brian O'Shaughnessy and Graham Aldred's first case sees them in a Brighton health spa as they search for assets to seize in pursuit of a £20,000 debt. Following a stand-off, they devise a way to work with the owner and her professional advisers to come up with a solution. Later, Graham reveals his softer side when he revisits a woman who defaulted on a debt payment plan. (R)

7.10 NCIS: Los Angeles. Callen and Sam investigate when an ex-marine is killed by an explosive device hidden in his mobile phone and discover the other members of his bomb disposal unit are also in danger. (R)

8.00 NCIS. Gibbs is taken back to the team's latest investigation, a politically sensitive case involving an assassination attempt on Prince Sayif, a visiting Saudi dignitary with a taste for the high life. (R)

9.00 NCIS. A prostitute and what seems to be one of her clients are gunned down in a drive-by shooting, and when it emerges that the would-be John was actually a Navy officer, Gibbs and D'Innocenzo realise the killings are connected. Lex Tarlinton, an incomplete operation to bring justice to those responsible for an attack on a US airport in 1979, which left 100 people dead. The main suspect is a former Colombian drug kingpin known as Tomas Orlando, and the murdered sex worker was about to hand over crucial DNA evidence that could have connected him to the crime, but now that she is dead, Gibbs and the others must find another way to finally bring Orlando in.

9.55 5 News Weekend.
10.00 Big Brother. Catching up with the Big Brother contestants as they react to Friday night's live eviction. **11.05** Jason Manford Live. (R) **12.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** Big Brother. (R) **4.00** The Secret Life of Kittens. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Squeeze & Madness at Glastonbury 2016 **8.00** Baaba Maal & Mbongwana Star at Glastonbury 2016 **9.00** Egypt's Lost Cities **10.30** New Order & Philip Glass's Heroes Symphony at Glastonbury 2016 **12.30** Synth Britannia at the BBC **1.30** Top of the Pops: 1982 **2.00** When Albums Ruled the World **3.30** Close

ITV2
12.25 Ninja Warrior UK **1.30** Film: The Perfect Man (2005) **2.30** FYI Daily **2.35** Film: The Perfect Man (2005) **3.35** Film: Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore (2010) **4.35** FYI Daily **4.40** Film: Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore (2010) **5.15** Film: Along Came Polly (2004) **6.15** FYI Daily **6.20** Film: Along Came Polly (2004) **7.05** Film: Rumour Has It (2005) **8.05** FYI Daily **8.10** Film: Rumour Has It (2005) **9.00** Love Island: The Weekly Hotlist **10.00** Celebrity Juice **10.50** Family Guy **12.20** American Dad! **1.20** The Cleveland Show **2.20** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.45** Teleshopping **5.5** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.25 FYI Daily **11.30** Film: Les Misérables (1978) **12.45** Foy's War **2.50** Midsummer Murders **7.00** Doc Martin **8.00** Lewis **10.00** Inspector Morse **12.10** The Jury **1.10** City Lights **2.05** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
11.15 The Saint **12.20** British Touring Car Championship Highlights **1.50** Pawn Stars **2.45** Film: Police Academy 3: Back in Training (1986) **4.30** Film: Superman (1978) **5.30** FYI Daily **5.35** Film: Superman (1978) **7.30** World Series of Darts: Shanghai **11.30** Film: Sleepers (1996) **12.30** FYI Daily **12.35** Film: Sleepers (1996) **2.25** Movies Now **2.35** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.30 Baby Daddy **12.30** How I Met Your Mother **1.30** The Goldbergs **4.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: Immortals (2011) **11.10** Gogglebox **1.20** Rude Tube: Love Bytes **2.20** The Inbetweeners **3.15** Gogglebox **4.05** New Girl **4.30** Revenge **Film4**
11.00 The Last Mimzy (2007) **1.00** Fantastic Mr Fox (2009) **2.40** The Phantom (1996) **4.40** Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian (2009) **6.45** iRobot (2004) **9.00** Bullet to the Head (2012) **10.45** Predator 2 (1990) **12.55** 4.3.2.1 (2010) **3.15** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Dark Desire, Channel 5, 3.20pm

A woman trapped in an unhappy marriage suffers further misery when she learns that her student son has died in a tragic accident. She turns to his sympathetic college roommate for solace and they begin an affair - but she gradually realises her lover may have murdered her child. Thriller, starring Kelly Lynch and Nic Robuck. (2012)

WEDNESDAY

The Haunting in Connecticut, Channel 4, 1.30am

A family relocates to an old Victorian house to be closer to a clinic where their son is receiving treatment for cancer. When the teenager begins to suffer strange visions and nightmares, he learns the property was once inhabited by a demonic messenger, who returns to unleash terror on the new residents. Horror, starring Kyle Gallner. (2009)

THURSDAY

Deadly Revenge, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman starts a relationship with a seemingly perfect man who has an intense relationship with his mother. She discovers his only previous girlfriend died mysteriously, and becomes consumed with paranoia as she investigates what became of her. Thriller, starring Alicia Ziegler. (2013)



Fallen, Friday, BBC1 11.55pm

FRIDAY

Baby Sellers, Channel 5, 3.20pm

The owner of an adoption agency maintains a respectable reputation, while secretly the children she provides to desperate clients are obtained by illegal means. A customs agent develops suspicions about the criminal network behind the trade in kidnapped infants and tries to expose the scandal. Crime drama, starring Jennifer Finnigan and Kirstie Alley. (2013)
Fallen, BBC1, 11.55pm
A detective investigates a series of grisly murders that mimic the handiwork of an executed serial killer. The case takes a stranger twist when he realises a bloodthirsty disembodied demon is responsible - and that it can leap from one unsuspecting host to another. Supernatural thriller, starring Denzel Washington. (1998)

Who will be this year's ace in the pack?

There's barely been time for tennis fans to recover from Novak Djokovic beating Andy Murray in the French Open final, and now here we are again - as the world's best players return with their all-whites freshly bleached to do battle at the All England Club.

The third Grand Slam of the year on SW19's hallowed grass courts is always one of the highlights of the sporting calendar, and it's an early start for Sue Barker today, as she introduces coverage of the opening day's play.

The action on Centre Court traditionally begins with the men's singles champion beginning the defence of his title.

That man is Djokovic, who goes into the tournament as the heavy favourite after dominating the men's game for the last couple of seasons.

The Serb won his first Wimbledon title in 2011, and famously celebrated by eating a handful of Centre Court grass.

He made the final again in 2013; and in 2014 and 2015 was munching

happily on the turf again as he defeated Roger Federer both times to claim back-to-back titles - the first man to do so since Federer's unequalled five-year reign from 2003 to 2007.

Djokovic's four-set defeat of Murray in Paris a fortnight ago saw him become the first man since the great Rod Laver in 1969 to hold all four Grand Slam titles at the same time, and few would bet on him adding to his three Wimbledon successes a week on Sunday.

His main danger is likely to come from world No.2 and 2013 champ Murray, who may trail Djokovic in the head-to-head, but continues to win enough matches against the Serb and push him in the ones he loses to keep his rival and friend honest.

Murray can expect more support than ever this year after capturing the Davis Cup for Great Britain in 2015, and if he can keep heart-stopping five-set epics in the early rounds to a minimum, he could be solid pick to reach the final at the All England Club - where he's beaten Djokovic before.

As far as the women's tournament

goes, Serena Williams remains very much the queen of the game, but she hasn't won a Grand Slam title since she beat Garbine Muguruzza on Centre Court 12 months ago.

Her quest for the calendar-year Grand Slam and a 22nd title overall, which would tie Steffi Graf's Open Era record, was unexpectedly derailed by Italian veteran Roberta Vinci in New York last year.

Returning in January at the Australian Open, Williams suffered another surprise defeat to left-hander Angelique Kerber.

So no calendar Slam this year, but the quest for 22 was very much still on, and despite various illness and injury problems Williams stormed to the French Open final for the loss of just one set - only to be defeated by Garbine Muguruzza.

On the home front, Johanna Konta has enjoyed a 2016 campaign to remember and the Briton will be hopeful that the partisan crowd can see her reproduce the form which saw her reach the Australian Open semi-final in January.



Sue Barker presents Wimbledon 2016, Monday, BBC2, 11.30am

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Superfoods: The Real Story Channel 4, 8.30pm

Kate Quilton returns with the programme that investigates the purported health benefits of superfoods. She visits the Italian city of Naples to explore the potential cancer-busting properties of the humble tomato, before travelling to Japan to find out if the secret of youth is contained in fermented soya beans, and also examines if a glass of red wine can really help boost brain power.

Wentworth Prison

Channel 5, 10pm

Welcome back to Wentworth Prison, the Australian jail where the staff are arguably more dangerous than the inmates. It's been four months since Governor Joan Ferguson murdered Jess Warner and set fire to H Block, and she's now being held in Isolation Protection - which should give her more time to dream up new ways to fabricate her innocence.

TUESDAY

The Living and the Dead BBC1, 9pm

Fancy a spooky new drama to get your teeth into? Then this series starring Colin Morgan should be

just the ticket. When the death of his mother brings Nathan Appleby and his wife Charlotte back to the family estate in Somerset, they must turn the farm's fortunes around or risk ruin, and the devastation of the local community. However, when a vulnerable teenage girl is brought to Nathan, seemingly possessed by a terrifying spirit, he cannot leave her to suffer. He must use every psychological technique he has to find a way to free her from this terrible burden.

WEDNESDAY

Britain's Favourite Dogs ITV, 8pm

A countdown of the nation's 10 favourite breeds, based on a survey of 1,000 dog owners, discovering how the favourites have changed over the years. The survey also uncovers what makes people fall head over heels for a particular type of dog, with almost a quarter of all households in the UK accommodating one of man's best friends. The programme gets to meet the owners of some of Britain's most outstanding pooches, before revealing which breed emerges as top dog.



The Living and the Dead, Tuesday, BBC1, 9pm

THURSDAY

Ramsay's Hotel Hell Channel 4, 10pm

New series. Gordon Ramsay uses his wealth of experience in the restaurant business to help more struggling hotels, motels and B&Bs across America, putting the owners and staff to work as he attempts to save their establishments from disaster. He begins with a visit to Angler's Lodge in Island Park, Idaho. Owner Dave Eby built the lodge with his own hands, but a family tragedy has caused him and wife Dede to shy away from the hotel and the community. Gordon is desperate to help mend this broken family - but is it too late to save their business?

FRIDAY

Gogglesprogs Channel 4, 8pm

Young TV viewers watch a range of programmes, from entertainment shows to

documentaries and classic films, as well as up-to-the-minute news reports. In London, childhood friends Shuaib and Janai love watching cartoons together. In Birmingham, mates Edie and Teanna are both in the school book club, and in Leicester are six-year old Geet and her four-year-old brother Hanson, who wants to be a Formula 1 racing driver.

The Last Leg Channel 4, 10pm

Originally just a nightly Paralympics round-up on Channel 4, this show fronted by Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker, has become a massive success mainly due to it having exactly the right amount of edgy humour to break down barriers over disability and any other topics the public may feel are 'awkward'. So central is this idea to the show that there's even a twitter handle, #istok, which allows viewers to tweet questions. This provides some of the best moments - partly for confronting the dilemma partly in providing an excuse for Hills, Widdicombe and Brooker to cite the most stupid and/or offensive thing they have recently heard. Tonight the trio are joined by celebrity guests for a comic review of the past seven days, answering more edgy current affairs questions that other shows might duck.

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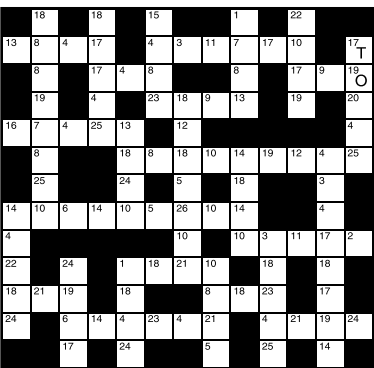
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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:
Z K C V P D T L G N Y F E
U I O R B H J W X M A Q S



Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

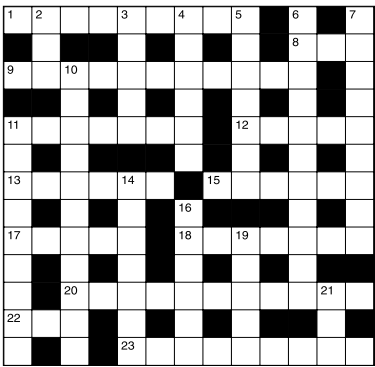
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- 1. Widespread, as far as one can see (9)
- 8. Member of some particular minority (3)
- 9. Be careful on the dogdgers, for example? (4,7)
- 11. Stops work and goes to bed (7)
- 12. Surpass with some complex cello playing (5)
- 13. To mother it's a female illness (6)
- 15. A draughtsman's intention? (6)
- 17. Mean to a girl (5)
- 18. What to write about a recital? (7)
- 20. Lanes that lead out of sight? (5,6)
- 22. There's nothing in vanilla left (3)
- 23. String net becomes entangled, leaving no loopholes (9)

Down

- 2. Turkish officer is against, but not this month (3)
- 3. Quarrelsome sculler (5)
- 4. The doctor got up, looking surly (6)
- 5. He's nice, perhaps, and from the East (7)
- 6. A ring that can work wonders (5,6)
- 7. Possibly alum can be for those who are ill (9)
- 10. You can't take anything like this (11)
- 11. Causing a trying delay? (9)
- 14. Books of record I'd brought up to sign (7)
- 16. It helps you to reach new heights (6)
- 19. It is in fact a long claw (5)
- 21. Craving for Japanese money (3)



Quick Clues:

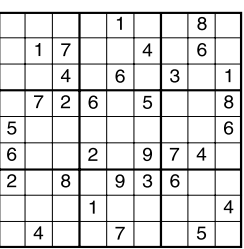
Across

- 1. Irresolute (9)
- 8. Deprive (3)
- 9. Formidable (11)
- 12. Offspring (5)
- 13. Buggy (6)
- 15. Gracious (6)
- 17. Perch (5)
- 18. Desecrate (7)
- 20. Feat (11)
- 22. In bloom (3)
- 23. Virago (9)

Down

- 2. Born (3)
- 3. Vessel for milk (5)
- 4. Waver (6)
- 5. Complete collapse (7)
- 6. Rash (11)
- 7. Plenty (9)
- 10. Worsen (11)
- 11. Ducking (9)
- 14. Small axe (7)
- 16. Seem (6)
- 19. Musical drama (5)
- 21. Woman in religious order (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	6	4	7	5	8	1	3	9
5	1	8	3	4	9	2	7	6
9	7	3	2	1	6	5	4	8
4	9	2	5	6	7	8	1	3
7	8	6	4	3	1	9	5	2
1	3	5	8	9	2	4	6	7
3	4	9	6	8	5	7	2	1
6	2	1	9	7	4	3	8	5
8	5	7	1	2	3	6	9	4

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Uproot; 8 Feline; 10 Sham-poo; 11 Genie; 12 Flee; 13 Rates; 17 Might; 18 Page; 22 Error; 23 Mastery; 24 Modest; 25 Portia. Down: 1 Puts off; 2 Breaker; 3 Loops; 4 Reigned; 5 Giant; 6 Level; 9 Not at home; 14 Digness; 15 Talents; 16 New Year; 19 Seems; 20 Crude; 21 Estop. QUICK - Across: 7 Origin; 8 Compel; 10 Besides; 11 Title; 12 None; 13 Topic; 17 Spoil; 18 Solo; 22 Antic; 23 Thought; 24 Paltry; 25 Quiver. Down: 1 Combine; 2 Dissent; 3 Finds; 4 Contain; 5 Spile; 6 Alter; 9 Associate; 14 Spectre; 15 Forgive; 16 Contort; 19 Happy; 20 Still; 21 Bogus.

Quiz

- 1. Of which words is pixel a contraction?
- 2. In which county is Scafell Pike?
- 3. Who played the Catwoman in the film Batman Returns?
- 4. How is the N American caribou also known?
- 5. In Greek mythology, of what was Irene the goddess?
- 6. By what name is the marsupial Sarcophilus harrisii better known?
- 7. In which castle was Edward II murdered?
- 8. How many letters are there in the Greek alphabet?
- 9. At which game was actor Omar Sharif an expert?
- 10. Which subatomic particle is named after the Greek for 'first'?

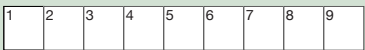
Last week's solutions:

- Quiz: 1 Mount Sinai; 2 Peter Cushing; 3 Scotland; 4 Alfred the Great; 5 George Best; 6 Myanmar; 7 Trumpet; 8 A tree or its fruit; 9 Marchioness; 10 Mormonism.
- Niner: DEFORMING

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

- 824 gives a boy's name,
- 6769 gives a girl's name,
- 16235 gives another girl's name.



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16 JUL • EXHIBITIONISM - THE ROLLING STONES EXHIBITION
16 JUL • FARNBOROUGH AIR SHOW & IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM
30 JUL • WEMBLEY STADIUM TOUR & LONDON'S MUSEUM DISTRICT
30 JUL • MYHOREN AT ACHILAND CASTLE (IRISH)
6 AUG • MUHAMMAD ALI EXHIBITION, OLENDON • EMMERDALE
8 AUG • EDINBURGH TATTOO & CUMBRAE CRUISE
15 AUG • RED BULL AIR RACE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
15 AUG • SOUTHPORT FLOWER SHOW
20 AUG • LIVERPOOL FC STADIUM TOUR & FOOTBALL MUSEUM
20 AUG • EBOR STAKES • EMMERDALE
28 AUG • NORTH SEA TALL SHIPS REGATTA

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2 for 1
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6pm-9pm
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MON 18 JUL, 8, 22 AUG, 12 SEP, 3 OCT

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Making of Harry Potter**

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SAT 20 AUG, 3, 24 SEP, 8 OCT, 12, 19, 26 NOV

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10, 31 Jul, 7, 28 Aug, 11 sep

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Sweet and spicy – curry shrimp and mango



Jamaican brown chicken one pot with rice



Bright and bold – inside the restaurant



A taste of the Caribbean – Turtle Bay, Birmingham

Turtle may be popular but not sure I would be willing to shell out again

By Lisa Wright

YOU know when you go somewhere for dinner and you have really high expectations. You really want it to be amazing?

That's exactly how I felt about Turtle Bay. I'd heard some really good things from friends and colleagues that had been and so I was really looking forward to my first visit to give the food a try.

I'd popped in for drinks on a few occasions previously and each time not only was the bar packed, but the restaurant heaving with diners. So for a recent family meal, with two small children, it seemed the perfect place – not too pricey, laid back and fun.

What I'd liked most about the venue from previous experience was the holiday feel you got from standing at the bar, sipping a few cocktails and soaking up the colourful

Caribbean decor and music. There really was a buzz about the place. And the menu looked really tempting too, and split into a number of different sections depending on what you're after.

I'm a huge fan of Caribbean food with my father hailing from Jamaica and there's a real shortage of restaurants offering the cuisine, so I was looking forward to what was on offer. The menu looked tempting, throwing in some more traditional dishes with those I wasn't expecting to see.

We'd got a table for six people booked for 6.30pm on a Thursday evening and when we arrived it wasn't ready, so we were invited to wait in the entrance area and pointed to a table – a table full of dirty glasses and plates from the previous occupants. Not great.

When our table was ready it took another half an hour for drinks to arrive. If I hadn't been out with the family and two small children I would have walked out already, but we waited patiently. There was no children's menu so my niece and nephew – aged eight and five – chose from the lighter menu, both going for the quarter jerk chicken and chips.

Seasoning

Some of us wanted starters and we went for the beef patty, jerk glazed ribs and chilli fried squid. It took a while for the food to arrive, but when it did it was tasty.

The beef patty was seasoned well and the pastry cooked nicely. The shrimp also went down a treat. The ribs were quite small as a portion, but the meat was tender. However, the jerk seasoning was very spicy – definitely not one for the kids.

For mains, my niece loved her jerk chicken and chips, the chicken was mild and moist. My nephew's fries however, were so overcooked we had to send them back.

My mum wolfed down her curry, shrimp and mango one pot, which was loaded with shrimps, mango and sweet potatoes and got the firm thumbs-up. While my sisters enjoyed their Jamaican browned chicken one pot and the jerk salmon, which was a generous piece of fish with a tasty, crispy skin.

However my dish – the Mo'Bay chicken – was a real disappointment.

The main problem was that the chicken breast had been chargrilled first and then smothered in a creamy sauce. What resulted was just a burnt taste of chicken that the sauce couldn't hide. But my biggest bugbear of the night was the service. In a word, it was slow.

I'm not sure I'd be in a hurry to return.

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"The 'from' price and price bands vary for each show — see brochure/web page for details.

London is the natural home of theatre and the musical is king in the capital's world-famous West End. British musicals that prove a runaway success here, often go on to triumph on Broadway and around the globe. The winning combination of engaging writing, captivating stage design and commanding performance has enabled London theatres to achieve box office smashes time and time again.

Omega Holidays offer a superb portfolio of theatre breaks, managing the whole show package which includes travel, either by coach or rail, four-star accommodation and various price bands for each show. Make your own way breaks are also available to book.

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The ticket is for a Saturday evening performance.

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Theatre Showstopper from £239.⁹⁵

This popular theatre package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday returning on Sunday.

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Coach inclusive breaks – Two days

Saturday Night from £149.⁹⁵

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For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option, see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the evening performance (meal not included).

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Nicely presented and impressively extended home

A superbly presented and impressively extended detached family home, 22 Dog Kennel Lane, Oldbury has been renovated throughout and lies in popular location.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £385,000.

It has a large lounge, a further spacious sitting room/dining room, a fully re-fitted dining kitchen with central island, a downstairs shower room/guest cloakroom and utility room.

There are also four large bedrooms to the first floor with one having en suite facilities and a house bathroom, whilst the second floor provides a very large master bedroom with full en-suite bathroom.

In more detail it has an entrance hall with stairs off and ceiling spot lighting and an under-stairs cupboard, a large lounge with bi-folding doors opening to the garden, a vaulted ceiling and a Velux-style roof light and a further set of bi-folding doors to the dining kitchen.

There is a further lounge/sitting room with a bay window overlooking the frontage with a feature fire.

The dining kitchen has a range of high gloss units with worktops over, a larder unit, central island unit with fitted cupboards beneath and pop up sockets, integrated full height fridge and integrated full height freezer, built-in Siemens double oven with matching Siemens microwave, a fitted Siemens five ring gas hob with Siemens stainless steel cooker hood, integrated dishwasher, pan and cutlery drawers, bi-folding doors leading to the lounge and a door to the garden. The utility room has a full height broom cupboard and a door to the garage. The shower room/guest cloakroom includes a heated towel rail.

Off the first floor landing bedroom one has an en-suite with a fully tiled shower cubicle. There are three further bedrooms on this floor as well as a large bathroom. The second floor landing has a Velux-style roof light. This floor houses bedroom five which is served by an en-suite bathroom.

Outside the property has a wide blocked paved driveway providing ample off road parking. The attractive rear garden comprises a blocked paved patio with shaped lawns, mature flower and borders.

OLDBURY £385,000



TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Hicks Hadley

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KEY FEATURES

Renovated throughout

Impressively extended

5 bedrooms

House bathroom and shower room

2 en suite shower/bathrooms



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COVENTRY, Underhill Close£1,300 pcm+Fees
A great opportunity to rent this well presented modern 4 bedroom detached property in the sought after location of Finham/parish of Baginton area. This double glazed, gas central heated house has entrance hall, cloakroom, large lounge, fitted kitchen with integrated appliances, 4 good size bedrooms with 1 en-suite shower, 3 with fitted wardrobes, family bathroom, garage, driveway & low maintenance garden. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Hagley Road£1,250 pcm+Fees
A superbly presented detached family home in prime central location close to all amenities and comes part furnished. Featuring entrance hallway, dining room, delightful lounge, conservatory, large refitted stunning breakfast/kitchen with centre island & integrated appliances, 4 bedrooms, master en-suite, house bathroom, landscaped rear garden, garage & driveway. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Meadowbrook Road£775 pcm+Fees
Large 3 bed mid row style semi-detached property features: 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, 1 single, bathroom with shower, garage (storage only), private rear garden, driveway parking for multiple vehicles, gas central heated and double glazed. Ideally located for Huntingtree and Lutley Primary School. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Broadway Avenue£750 pcm+Fees
Modern 3 bedroom semi-detached house centrally located within minutes of Halesowen Town Centre and features entrance hallway, lovely fitted kitchen, large living room, 3 double bedrooms, bathroom suite with separate shower, driveway parking. Not to be missed! EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Mayfield Road£695 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished detached bungalow set in a quiet cul-de-sac in this very popular residential area close to schools and bus links. Featuring large lounge, fitted kitchen, 2 double & 1 large bedroom, gas central heating, double glazing, front & rear gardens, garage. A property to be seen and appreciated. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Middlefield Avenue£650 pcm+Fees
Located in Hurst Green this unfurnished semi detached house comprising of 26ft through lounge/dining Room, a fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms and a further single. Benefits from a garage and driveway with low maintenance gardens & Very popular area. Viewings highly recommended. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Sanderson Place£650 pcm+Fees
Luxury living in Hayley Green. A superb ground floor apartment offering spacious accommodation including open plan lounge/kitchen and diner, 2 double bedrooms, master with en-suite, further well appointed bathroom with shower, gas central heating, double glazing and allocated parking. EPC: B



STOURBRIDGE, Queensway£625 pcm+Fees
A really deceptive and extended 3 bedroom property close to local shops and schools. This fantastic home has recently been fully refurbished, including central heating system, kitchen, shower room, doors and carpets! You really do need to view to appreciate the amount of accommodation on offer: there is even a summer house in the garden! driveway, fore/rear gardens. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Linnet Close£595 pcm+Fees
Unfurnished semi detached house set in popular cul-de-sac location close to Halesowen Town Centre. This lovely property features 2 bedrooms, lounge, fitted kitchen, bathroom with shower, gas central heating, garage and driveway parking, rear garden. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Brett Young Close£575 pcm+Fees
An impressive 1st floor apartment within walking distance to Halesowen Town Centre briefly comprising of: 2 double bedrooms, spacious lounge, modern kitchen and separate dining area, modern bathroom with shower, allocating parking. EPC: B



EDGBASTON, Shooters Close£575 pcm+Fees
Set in a quiet cul-de-sac, A stones throw away from Calthorpe Park. This semi-detached home comprising of: Two double bedrooms, large lounge, large kitchen, family bathroom, brand new double glazing, gas central heating, driveway parking and a garage, further benefits from front and rear gardens. EPC: D



STOURBRIDGE, King William Street£575 pcm+Fees
Refurbished mid terrace house close to town centre comprising of: 2 reception rooms, large kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, gas central heating, double glazing, downstairs bathroom with shower and a shared rear garden. A lovely property not to be missed! EPC: TBC



CRADLEY HEATH, Silverthorne Lane£525 pcm+Fees
A really well presented modern style 2 bedroom house close to Cradley Heath Train Station and bus links. Lounge with fireplace, large fitted kitchen with new oven/hob, patio doors to rear garden. Upstairs bathroom with shower, gas central heating, driveway parking. Minimum 12 month contract. EPC: C



CRADLEY HEATH, Trejon Road£525 pcm+Fees
An Unfurnished Detached House Within Minutes Of Old Hill Train Station, Haden Hill Leisure Centre And Close To Timberlee Primary School. Briefly Comprising: Electric Storage Heating, Living Room, Dining Room, Small Fitted Kitchen, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom, Front And Rear Gardens, Driveway For 1 Car. EPC: TBC



KIDDERMINSTER, Patin House£515 pcm+Fees
A 1 bedroom ground floor apartment set in a converted Victorian house comprising of: porch, lounge, fitted kitchen with appliances and granite work tops, double bedroom, fully tiled bathroom with shower, study, gas central heating (under floor heating to kitchen & bathroom) double glazing, communal gardens and allocated parking. Available Now! EPC: TBC



CRADLEY HEATH, Seedhouse Court£495 pcm+Fees
Set within lovely private gardens. Ideally located for Old Hill train station, local shops and buses for Cradley Heath, Halesowen and Merry Hill, an unfurnished ground floor apartment features 2 double bedrooms, fitted kitchen with white goods, spacious lounge, house bathroom with shower, allocated parking. EPC: C



HALESOWEN/COLLEY GATE, Ladysmith Road£495 pcm+Fees
A mid terrace house in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. This house features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, dining area, new downstairs shower room, 2 good size bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Walton Court£450 pcm+Fees
A spacious 1st floor flat surrounded by maintained communal gardens in a popular location. Comprises entrance hall with storage cupboard, double bedroom, fitted kitchen with marble effect work surface, separate utility room, light and airy lounge, bathroom with shower over bath and shed. Available End of August/September. Garage not included. EPC: TBC



CRADLEY HEATH, Elbow Street£440 pcm+Fees
Set in the heart of Old Hill. A modern and spacious 2nd floor apartment, ideally situated for Old Hill train station and shopping in Cradley Heath. This apartment offers 1 double bedroom, fitted kitchen with washer/dryer, modern bathroom with shower, large lounge, 1 allocated parking space. An opportunity not to be missed! EPC: B



STOURBRIDGE, Bagley Street£425 pcm+Fees
COMING SOON! 4 fully refurbished apartments (2 - ground floor & 2 - 1st floor) within a stones throw of Stourbridge town centre. The apartments feature an open plan lounge/fitted kitchen, shower room, 1 double bedroom & private rear parking. Not to be missed! EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Cobham Road£420 pcm+Fees
COMING SOON! A 1 bedroom 1st floor apartment within walking distance to Halesowen Town Centre. Offering generous accommodation including: lounge with kitchen, 1 double bedroom, bathroom with shower, double glazing, on road parking, unfurnished. EPC: G

PROPERTY



A distinctive feature-packed four-bed bungalow

An individual, distinctive and spacious dormer bungalow, 1 Water Road, Lower Gornal, lies in a sought-after village with excellent schools nearby.

It is for sale through Trinity Property at £279,500. With double glazing, central heating and a lovely open log fire in the lounge, it has an entrance porch leading to the spacious entrance hall with access

LOWER GORNAL

£275,000

to the lounge, a kitchen, a dining room and downstairs WC.

There is a separate office area through an archway in the lounge and the dining room has a serving hatch into the kitchen. The kitchen

has built-in cooker, hob, dishwasher, fridge and breakfast bar.

To the rear is a utility with access to the large garden and garage. Upstairs there are four good-sized bedrooms (three doubles and a single) with an en suite shower/WC off the master and house bathroom/WC with a corner bath.

Contact 01384 213 395 or visit the site www.trinityproperty.net



Many original features at this characterful cottage home

DUDLEY WOOD

£270,000

<<<

A characterful detached cottage/bungalow in Mushroom Green, Dudley Wood, The Old Cott has many original features and spacious accommodation.

It is for sale through The Property Shop at £270,000. Believed to date back to 1857 and having atmospheric rooms that cannot be replicated and is only a short stroll from Saltwells Nature Reserve and Mousesweet Brook.

It has an entrance hall, lounge with original working cast iron range, kitchen, conservatory/dining room, master bedroom with en suite, second bedroom, outhouse utility, garden WC, workshop, detached garage and beautifully tended gardens.

Call The Property Shop on 01384 456022 or visit www.thepropertyshop.co.uk

Hagley



Station Road
* Impressive Edwardian Semi-Detached
* 4 Reception Rooms, Fitted Kitchen/Dining Room, Large Family Room, Utility/Hobbies
* 4 Bedrooms (Principal with Ensuite Bathroom & Dressing Areas)
* South Facing Gardens EPC=D
Offers in the region of £599,995

Halesowen



Lodge Close
* A spacious four bedroom detached house.
* Desirable location and enclosed gardens.
* Two en-suites, house bathroom.
* Lounge, dining room, study.
* Fitted kitchen leading to conservatory.
* Double garage, utility. EPC=C
Offers in the region of £525,000

Romsley



Dark Lane
* Impressive Detached Bungalow
* Outstanding views of neighbouring districts
* 3 bedrooms (Principal Ensuite)
* Shower Room * Lounge * Dining Room
* Fitted Kitchen, Utility Room, Sun Lounge
* Landscaped Gardens EPC=E
Offers in the region of £499,500

Halesowen



Blackberry Lane
* A detached family house with four bedrooms
* Lounge, dining room and study * Principal bedroom with en-suite, house bathroom
* Fitted kitchen with host of appliances, utility
* Detached double garage, lovely gardens
EPC=C
Offers in the region of £385,000

Halesowen



Hagley Road West
* Deceptively Spacious Detached family home
* Four good sized bedrooms
* Large lounge/dining room
* Breakfast room leading onto kitchen
* Tandem garage * Beautiful rear garden with southerly aspect EPC=F
Offers in the region of £349,950

Oldbury



Wolverhampton Road
* Detached House
* Living room and dining room
* Kitchen and breakfast room
* Conservatory * Five bedrooms
* Garage
* Extensive rear garden EPC=D
Offers in the region of £349,950

Oldbury



Oak Road
* Dining room * Living room
* Former garage/family room
* Kitchen and utility
* Bedroom two with en-suite
* Four further bedrooms
* Family bathroom EPC=D
Offers in the region of £325,000

Birmingham



Glyn Farm Road
* Traditional style semi detached house
* Tastefully presented accommodation
* Two reception rooms * Quality fitted kitchen
* Three bedrooms * Well appointed bathroom with both bath and shower
* Exceptionally good sized gardens
* Off road parking and car port EPC=E
Offers in the region of £199,995

Halesowen



Lusbridge Close
* Detached house situated in cul-de-sac
* Kitchen/breakfast room
* Utility
* Two reception rooms and conservatory
* Four bedrooms (one with en-suite)
* Garage EPC=D
Offers in the region of £270,000

Halesowen



Hiplands Road
* Semi detached house with potential
* Prominent corner position
* Detached garage with driveway
* Three bedrooms
* Through lounge
* Lovely views EPC=D
Offers in the region of £239,950

Halesowen



Middlefield Avenue
* Link detached house
* "Lounge" Dining room
* Conservatory
* Breakfast room
* Three bedrooms
* Bathroom * Garage EPC=D
Offers in the region of £239,950

Halesowen



Narrow Lane
* Spacious Detached house
* Three reception rooms
* Study * Downstairs wc and utility
* Five bedrooms one with en-suite
* Bathroom
* Pleasant garden and garage. EPC=E
Offers in the region of £304,950

Rowley Regis



Yew Tree Lane
* Well proportioned detached house
* Kitchen/breakfast room
* Three reception rooms
* Utility and downstairs shower room
* Three good sized bedrooms
* Re-fitted shower room * Garage
* Beautiful rear garden EPC=tb
Offers in the region of £209,950

Halesowen



Lilac Way
* A spacious detached bungalow
* Two bedrooms and shower room
* Reception hall, fitted cloakroom
* Kitchen/breakfast room
* Landscaped gardens, detached garage
* Inspection recommended. EPC=D
Offers in the region of £225,000

Oldbury



Chestnut Road
* Extended much improved semi detached house * Two reception rooms
* Extended re-fitted kitchen
* Three bedrooms * Re-fitted bathroom and additional wc * Small garage
* Pleasant rear garden EPC=tb
Offers in the region of £224,950

Halesowen



Carters Lane
* Well Maintained Semi Detached House
* Situated on Service Road
* Three Bedrooms * Two Reception Rooms
* Good Sized Kitchen
* Popular Residential Location
* Attractive Rear Garden EPC=D
Offers in the region of £209,950

Quinton



High Street
* Terraced House
* Three bedrooms
* Two reception rooms
* Well appointed bathroom
* Rear garden
* No chain EPC=E
Offers in the region of £169,950

Halesowen



Lyttleton Avenue
* Detached House in need of modernisation
* Two reception rooms
* Downstairs wc
* Three bedrooms
* Delapidated garage EPC=E
Offers in the region of £165,000

Halesowen Hurst Green



Fairfield Road
* Detached bungalow
* Two Bedrooms
* Open plan kitchen/living room
* Utility
* Two bedrooms
* Shower room EPC=D
Offers in the region of £165,000

Kidderminster



Spencer Street
* End terrace house
* Two Bedrooms
* Lounge * Kitchen * Cellar
* Shower room
* Enclosed Garden
* Gas boiler heating radiators
* Double glazed windows EPC=D
Offers in the region of £114,950

Dudley



Swan Street
* Large end terrace house
* Downstairs wc
* Re-fitted kitchen/breakfast room
* Lounge and dining room
* Three bedrooms
* Bathroom
* Additional plot of land EPC=D
Offers in the region of £135,000

Halesowen



Park Road
* Link detached bungalow * Two bedrooms and bathroom * Lounge, kitchen and side garage
* Enclosed elevated rear garden. * Situated on main bus route to Halesowen and Stourbridge Town Centres EPC=D
Offers in the region of £125,000

Halesowen



Beaumont Road
* Two bedroom terraced house
* Two reception rooms
* Ground floor bathroom & first floor shower room
* Rear garden
EPC=D
Offers in the region of £124,950

Birmingham B32



Parkside
* Semi-detached house
* Three bedrooms
* Kitchen/breakfast room
* Shower room
* Rear garden
* Garage EPC=C
Offers in the region of £121,250

Halesowen



Kent Road
* Ground floor flat
* Kitchen/breakfast room
* Living room
* Two bedrooms
* Shower room
* Private garden EPC=C
Offers in the region of £119,950

Halesowen



Vicarage Road
* Terraced house
* Kitchen and lobby
* Ground floor bathroom
* Three bedrooms
* Rear Garden
EPC=D
Offers in the region of £110,000

Halesowen



Oaklands Court
* Second floor flat
* Living room * Two bedrooms
* Communal parking
* Communal gardens EPC=C
Offers in excess of £110,000

Halesowen



Brett Young Close
* Second floor flat
* Open plan living space with kitchen area
* Two bedrooms
* Bathroom
* Allocated parking EPC=B
Offers in the region of £109,950

Halesowen



Long Lane
* Two bedroom terraced house
* Conveniently situated for Blackheath Town Centre * In need of some general modernization
* Kitchen/breakfast room
* Bathroom * Ideal for first time buyers or investors EPC=D
Offers in the region of £79,950

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MANDY 44, fun flirty blonde, petite size 6-8, gorgeous green eyes seeks special male for friendship and uncomplicated love. Age unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422863

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GILL 61, slim dark eyed blonde seeks tall carefree male who is looking for someone special for fun times with no complications. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422843

WENDY, mature, passionate ladylike divorcee seeks no strings casual friendship/fun with gent any age. Tel No: 0906 515 3032 Box 421605

JACKIE 40, slim brunette, with sultry green eyes seeks tall guy with nice eyes who understands women, for some really good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422819

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SARAH, brown hair, dark eyes, likes crafts, cooking, cinema, socialising, looking for a male friend. 30-35, possibly leading to relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422589

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JO 45, hardworking nurse with crazy sense of humour, looking for fun male with plenty of ideas to spice up her spare time. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422545

AFRICAN lady, 45 yrs, 5ft 8, slim, sensual, creative, interesting, looking for NSA fun with a man of means. Must be non-smoker. Text only Mailbox: 5475056

KATRIANA, professional sincere lady, 48yrs, loves to have a good time. Very sensual and loves men of all ages. Please text me for a chat. Text Only Box 4148978

RITA 41, exotic olive skinned female, friendly, chatty, loves to entertain, seeks loving honest male to pamper and make happy. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422723

ANNE, 40, pretty professional fun female with great curves, looking for fun and romance with down to earth male looking for similar. Any age/status. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422711

PETRIANA, 44, very attractive, voluptuous blonde, with old-fashioned values, seeks romantic down to earth male for a special relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422717

PASSIONATE, broadminded curvy lady 67 seeks very assertive discreet young male 25-45 for no strings fun, looks like a dream. Text only Mailbox: 5480845

JULIE, petite, slim, attractive blonde young looking early 40s, enjoys wining, dining, theatre seeking good looking romantic male, 45-55, for mutual spoiling. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422708

JACKIE, 49, dark hair, green eyes, cuddly build, likes going out, gym, reading, looking for an honest gentleman for friendship/possible relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422527

LADY, 48, 5ft2, hazel eyes, brown hair, likes bowling, meals out, nights in, ice skating, looking for a toy boy, 30-42, who is fun and enjoys life to have a good time with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422679

WIDOW, 512, looking for a gentleman for friendship, days out, meals out and for friendship and companionship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422657

JEAN, 75, black hair, hazel eyes, medium build, likes dancing, singing, gardening, bingo, meals out, days out, Scotland. WLTW a gentleman any age for company and friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422551

SARA 34yr old single mum looking for a genuine male to make me laugh again and help put the spark back into my life. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422541

SAHAR, brown hair, dark eyes, likes crafts, cooking, cinema, socialising, looking for a male friend. 30-35, possibly leading to relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422589

JEAN, 75, lives in West Midlands, likes gardening, bingo, dancing, travelling, generally nice things, WLTW local gentleman for company and friendship, hoping to hear from you. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422571

JOANNE, 48, curly black female, likes cooking, cinema, socialising, seeking friendship leading to LTR, must be honest, romantic, caring and loyal and have a GSOH. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422633

LUCY 37yrs 5ft 11ins brunette, loves nightlife, socialising, having fun, looking for fun guy who can make me laugh and promises a good time. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422455

JO 45, hardworking nurse with crazy sense of humour, looking for fun male with plenty of ideas to spice up her spare time. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422545

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Single Men

SARA 34yr old single mum looking for a genuine male to make me laugh again and help put the spark back into my life. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422541

LORNA 28, sensual blue-eyed blonde with a beautiful smile, seeking intelligent guy in good shape for new experiences and fun loving. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422491

MICHELLE, 37, pretty, very fit, well travelled, seeks active, broadminded male to share new experiences and adventures with. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422459

LORRAINE bored 36yr old looking for discreet no strings fun with likeminded uncomplicated male, any age/status. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422421

BIRMINGHAM female 65, smoker, likes music, cinema, theatre, meals out, WLTW male 66 - 73 for LTR. Text only Mailbox: 5474599

70 years young attractive caring genuine lady, seeks honest reliable man for friendship days out and poss LTR. Bristol/Bath area. Text only Mailbox: 4648891

PAT, petite blonde lady, GSOH, young looking for her age, seeks genuine gent any age with GSOH. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422393

RITA, seeks a genuine male for friendship, days out, shes very friendly, genuine and social, give her a call. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422403

MERRY, widow, dark hair, kind and caring, hoping to meet a kind gent for friendship, possibly more. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422339

BARBARA, is a caring lady who seeks a man to care for, she will do anything to make you happy. Just give her a call today. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422411

CARING, honest female, WLTW genuine gentleman for LTR in the West Midlands area. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422111

MALE, mid 60s, broadminded, WLTW female for intimate adult fun and pleasure. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422557

LIKEABLE easy going honest white male, slim build, likes sport, country walks, music, theatre, pubs, eating out WLTW attractive lady for friendship/relationship. Text only Mailbox: 5489438

JIMBO, friendly fun loving chap, 42yrs, own building company. Divorced, no kids. Wants a kind caring lady to spoil, any age, single mums welcome. Text Only Box: 4036422

GUY WLTW attractive smart lady, likes a dance or 2 and enjoys days out. Text only Mailbox: 4823044

MALE 57, tall, seeks mature female, 50-75, for close adult fun, any size or status. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422409

MALE, 50s, tall, attractive, seeks mature female, 40-70, for mutual spanking. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422429

RAY, late 50s, widow, 5ft10, average build, very sporty, broadminded, WLTW a nice lady, to go out, have a drink and see how we get on. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422789

RAMONE, very fit, looking for a like minded lady, any age, for discreet adult fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422479

ALAN, 49, genuine, builder, 6ft, six pack, GSOH, likes a laugh, lives in Coventry, wishes to meet a woman of any age for relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422755

VERY broadminded male, looking for some adult fun with a hot sexy female, any age, preferably broadminded too. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422823

SEMI retired business man, early 60s, well travelled, fit, tanned, good looking, solvent, very discreet. WLTW a female, 35-55, married or single, for wining, dining daytime fun. West Midlands or Staffs. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422805

JOE, semi retired, young looking and acting, slim and fit, 5ft8, considered good company, looking for daytime meets. Let's see if we click. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422803

TALL, attractive, Shrewsbury male, 57, WLTW an attractive female, any age/status, for discreet daytime fun and excitement. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422801

MIKE, 50, tall, brown hair, happy go lucky and ready for anything, seeking a soul mate for good times. Head, West Midlands. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422799

ATTRACTIVE Asian male, 42, likes music, travel, seeks attractive, Asian female, 30-45 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 361467

MALE, 5ft9, medium build, likes sports, WLTW a lady for daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422747

SINGLE male 50 medium build looking for someone to show me the ropes age between 60 - 85, txt only. Text only Mailbox: 5423010

42 yr old man seeking buxom, voluptuous, 50+ lady for naughty NSA fun, colour, race etc unimportant. Text only Mailbox: 5480459

RETIRED stonemason, dark hair, 5ft10, likes meals out, pubs, hotels, WLTW a young lady, status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422673

JOHN, WLTW a young lady, 18-23, for fun, go to hotels etc. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422671

50 year old male 5ft 10, slim, many interests, WLTW female for possible relationship. Text only Mailbox: 5484066

MALE, 71, WLTW lady, 18-23, for fun and games. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422669

47 year old guy, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, seeks female, 30-42, in the Leamington Spa/Rugby area, for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422637

MATURE male, 50s, looking for a female, 30-60, for adult fun in the b47 area, text only. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422619

SUGAR daddy, business man in North Birmingham, would love to spoil a slim woman, any race, children, no problem. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422599

50YR old slim, genuine male, seeks female, any age for fun times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 279508

WEST Midlands male, genuine, WLTW similar lady around 52 years old, so please get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422567

YOURSELF, 55-70, unattached, want a sane society, love rock and roll, swimming, LTR? This guy 69, unattached, WLTW you. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 422505

ATTRACTIVE, mature Asian male, 42, likes music, travel, cooking, seeks attractive female, 30-50 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 358113

JOE, 46, attractive male, GSOH, home/car owner, well travelled, seeking mature lady for friendship possibly more, all calls answered. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420665

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LOST MALE CAT

Named Diesel, black with distinctive white patch, 18 months old, last seen Sat, May 28, Wolverhampton WV3, microchipped, was wearing blue metallic collar with bell.
Please call 07823 557740

1 Family

clothing - womens

BEAUTIFUL wine taffeta full length dress, beaded bodice detail, worn once. Proms/Bridesmaid, size 8-10. Was £150. Sell £70.
Telephone 01902 893335.

elderly & disabled

ET4 SPORT SCOOTER, one year old, in good condition, new batteries fitted June 14, 2016. £500 or very near offer. 07580 74503.

MOBILITY SCOOTER Pico 4, fits into car boot, excellent condition, has 2 new batteries. £300. 01902 491501.

MOBILITY SCOOTERS from £350 can deliver, servicing available. Call: Powerlink, Blackheath 01394 255019 / 07831 246292.

WREKIN STAIRLIFTS reconditioned lifts from £795. New available. 01952 405397/07897 273617

2 Leisure Time

boats & water sports

CANOE x 3 1 long fast single fibre glass, 4.15m, £90. 1 small fibre glass, 2.85m, £30. 1 rubberised canvas 3.9m £30. 01902 897846.

caravans / motorhomes

ATLAS DEBONAIR on quiet farm site, CH, DG, 2 bedrooms. 01746 861192.

CLARACH BAY CARAVAN PARK

ABERYSTWYTH

3 bedroom static caravan, sleeps 8, CH, DG, timber decking, fees paid 2016.

See view.
£11,995.

01902 441210/07816 272574

HAFRYN JUBILEE DELUXE Caravan, Holiday Park, Porthmadog.

All Deluxe CH, DG. Sleeps six. Ready to occupy. All fittings. Insured. Site fees paid.
£18,000 ono.
0782 5338530.

NEW ABI OAKLEY caravan, DG, CH, 2-bedroom, 37x12, over looking lake, car parking and decking area. 01746 861192.

PEUGEOT BOXER Starblazer Autocruise, 2005, 4-berth, 2800cc, 39,000 miles, £19,000. 0121 602 1502 or 07530 22696.

STATIC CARAVAN

With decking, on private plot, quiet site in Mid Wales. No age limit. 2 fishing pools, 20 minutes to nearest coast, ground rent included for 2016.

£5,995 ono.
07555 303350.

STATIC CARAVAN 35 X 10

6-berth with decking, Mid Wales. Site fees paid for 2016.

Dog friendly.
£4,500.

07922 351352 No texts.

WILLERBY GRANADA 37x12, CH, DG, 2 bedrooms, green, on new site. 01746 861192.

caravans wanted

WANTED ALL CARAVANS

Any age or condition Also motorhomes wanted. TOP PRICES PAID Immediate collection. CALL THOMAS 07776373150

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FISHING TACKLE WANTED anything considered. New or Old 01902 754011 or 07831 568716

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BRIC-A-BRAC FAIR Sunday 26th June

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TWO HONER button key accordions complete with original Honer hand cases. £250 each in excellent working condition. 01902 819187.

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markets

STOURBRIDGE CAR BOOT

At Stourbridge Rugby Club Open every Wednesday from 18th May 07957 399964

3 Home & Services

furniture

COMPUTER DESK with shelf for printer, very good condition, £30. 01562 851658

COMPUTER DESK, with shelf for printer, very good condition, £30. Telephone 01562 851658.

CONSERVATORY furniture, 2 small cane glass topped tables £30, cane bookcase. £20, plant stand £10. offers accepted. 01902 671540.

FARM HOUSE table and four chair, very good condition, £250. Collect only. 01562 851658.

FARM HOUSE table and four chair, very good condition, £250. Collect only. 01562 851658.

HIDEABED 2 single beds, space saver, excellent for spare room as pulled out equates to large double. £100 collect only. 01562 851658.

HIDEABED 2 single beds, space saver, excellent for spare room as pulled out equates to large double. £100 collect only. 01562 851658.

PINE CHEST OF DRAWERS, approx 37ins wide x 46ins high, very good condition, £100. Collect only. 01562 851658.

PINE CHEST OF drawers, approx 37" wide, x 46" high, very good condition, £100. Collect only. 01562 851658.

THREE SEATER settee and two seater settee, both dark brown leather, good condition, £100 will separate. 07800 880842.

household appliances

FRIDGE FREEZER in excellent condition. £85 can deliver. 07493 915511.

in your garden

ATCO ELECTRIC lawnmower, steel roller, grassbox, 2 years old, little used, £100 ono. 01902 573176.

HANGING BASKETS, geraniums, begonias and trailing petunia. Competitive Prices. W H Brown 01902 762500.

LAWN TRACTOR 22hp, 42 inch cut with collector, totally new and unused. Cost £3,500. Will accept £1,850. Can deliver. Telephone 07710 169150.

items for sale

COMPLETE KITCHEN AND APPLIANCES FOR SALE Maple, shaker type. Integrated fridge / freezer / dishwasher. Zanussi built in double oven and hob / extractor. Sink / drainer and taps, 12 base units / top units and end corner units, centre island. Very good condition. To collect only. (Hagley Area) £1,250. 01562 883819.

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Fantastic value for price tag

By John Griffiths

Given a choice, I suppose most of us would like to be driving a 200mph supercar, or a Hollywood star's limousine: but buying one (and running it) are a very different matter.

Instead we use our heads and go for the most practical form of transport to meet our own particular needs, within the limits of what we can afford (or want to pay for a car).

So as car prices soar, the entrance of Dacia into the showrooms of Britain and other European countries must have been greeted with a sigh of relief for those without a bottomless pit of money.

One of its most popular models is the Duster, which offers that styling plus space and practicality for the price of a small hatchback. With prices starting from under £9,500 (albeit for a no-frills, rather basic version), the Duster stands out from the crowd of compact SUVs for sheer value for money.

Indeed even the better-kitted versions, with all the features we take for granted and a bit more, cost less than many of its most basic rivals. The test car, for example, a diesel-powered Laureate model costs from under £14,000 even with the addition of the optional satnav and multi-media system, with remote controls on the steering wheel.

The Duster recently enjoyed a facelift, with some styling touches to add to its visual appeal. There's a new chrome grille, Duster branded roof bars, new, higher quality upholstery, and – in the case of the Laureate – body coloured door handles, 16-inch alloy wheels

dark metal wing mirrors and chrome scuff plates front and rear.

The cheap look of the plastic interior components is broken up with a high gloss finish on areas such as the armrest and interior door handles. Not that plastic is necessarily a bad thing – just ask parents of young children and dog owners who want surfaces that are quick and easy to wipe.

The Duster seats four adults easily (five at a pinch) with plenty of head and leg room even in the back. The cargo space puts many compact SUV and family hatchback rivals to shame – 475 litres with a full complement of passengers, and an impressive 1,636 litres with rear seats folded down.

Complemented

The test car was a front wheel drive only model (four wheel drive adds £2,000 to the price) powered by a Renault-derived turbo diesel, producing 109bhp complemented by 260Nm of torque.

It's official (from the standard laboratory test) fuel average is 62.8mpg, which translates into a low CO2 emissions figure of 115g/km (VED band C).

Laboratory test figures, as we know, rarely translate into real world results but I was happy with the 52mpg achieved over a week of mixed motoring.

The car has an Eco button, plus a selectable stop/start system, to help you eke out precious fuel. An insurance rating of 11A will help to keep running costs down too.

Performance (0 to 62mph in 11.8 seconds) is plenty to get you up to the motorway limit or keep up with everyday traffic, without feeling like hard work or undue noise. Indeed, cruising at speed is a relaxed and refined affair, particularly as the quite soft suspension flattens



out the bumps and undulations on some of our poorer road surfaces.

While this is a front wheel drive only model, the car has a raised ride height, scuff plates, long travel suspension plus traction and stability controls which means it does have some limited off-road ability – certainly more than a standard hatchback, anyone.

The 4x4 versions also get a centre differential lock, where you can select two wheel drive for on-road economy, an auto option for slippery roads or a full lock mode for off-roading and snow.

The vehicle's height, plus suspension which is also used on the 4x4 models, means you can't expect the handling dynamics of a hot

hatch but the Duster can be hustled along without excessive body roll. The steering is light and stable in the straight ahead position. The six-speed gearbox has a slick action, and the Duster's brakes are well up to the task.

The centre of the Laureate's dash features a touch screen control for the optional satnav plus the audio (radio and CD player) controls, phone and USB connectivity.

Standard Duster equipment includes front and side airbags, ABS with emergency brake assist, traction control and an electronic stability programme, electric front windows, and remote central locking.

The higher specification Laureate also has alloy wheels, satin chrome roof rails and scuff

plates, manual air conditioning, a split/fold rear seat, electric windows all round, a height adjustable steering wheel front fog lights, a cruise control/speed limiter and a multi-function trip computer.

While the basic Duster at £9,500 and powered by a 1,600cc petrol engine, is the bargain basement the diesel-powered Laureate is the bargain.

Whichever way you look at it, the Duster is outstanding value for money.

The warranty covers you for three years or 60,000 miles but for £395 you can extend that for another two years, or for a one-off £850 you can have peace of mind for seven-years or 100,000 miles.

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Nissan's oh so mighty GT-R roars back again

By Matt Joy

The mighty GT-R is back again, refreshed and with more significant changes than in any previous version.

Some things haven't changed, namely the fact the Nissan GT-R is a combination of brutish power and sophisticated electronics delivering spectacular driving thrills – at an impressive price.

But the R35 generation first appeared in 2007, and although there have been tweaks in the past, this 2017 model-year version brings the most comprehensive update so far. There are discreet, but worthwhile, changes to the exterior, including improved aero and sharper detailing, while inside, the fascia has been substantially revised to make it more comfortable and easier to use.

Under the skin there are a host of revisions including more power, revised suspension and a stiffer body for improved handling.

The basic shape of the GT-R remains broadly unchanged, although there has been a subtle change to the C-pillar to reduce turbulence. More obvious tweaks are made elsewhere, with the front end benefiting from a version of the Nissan family 'V-grille' and a re-profiled lower bumper. The same goes for the side skirts and rear valance which look sharper as well as managing airflow better, and the influence of the hottest Nismo GT-R model is clear to see.

There's some new colours too including a vibrant orange, plus a new alloy wheel design, all of which adds freshness. It is still unmistakably a GT-R and not a million miles from the previous generation, but this is the best-looking R35 to date.

More urgent changes were required in the cabin, and the 2017 GT-R is all the better for a new dashboard layout. There's a new display screen sitting up top while the climate controls have been grouped in their own space just below, as well as more sensibly-placed air vents.

Nissan also claims improved materials, and there's no doubt that the leather trim is of a better quality. The design is sensible and plain rather than eye-catching, but it works well and is easier to use. The bucket seats on the standard model are a little narrow across the back, but the Recaro model brings with it a pair of seats which are far superior in comfort and support.

The 2017 GT-R has an additional 20bhp compared to the outgoing model as well as a slight increase in torque, although more crucially maximum torque is available across more of the rev band. From the driver's seat, you might not notice this increase, just that the GT-R is a ferociously fast machine. With drive distributed between all four wheels depending on the grip available and the fast-shifting dual-clutch transmission, acceleration is always available and relentless with it.

The changes to the suspension and body are subtle too, but the upshot is that the 2017 GT-R feels more stable and more responsive, particularly on bumpy roads, and as a result is even easier to hustle along challenging roads. It's the combination of steering accuracy, the unflappable suspension (providing you've selected the right setting for the road) and the sheer balance and stability that makes it not only hugely capable, but also a joy to exploit on the open road.

Our time with the car included many laps of Spa-Francorchamps, one of the most thrilling and challenging tracks anywhere in the world and the GT-R mastered it in style. It's perhaps heavier and more comfortable than a typical track car, but it stood up to the extreme speeds and abuse as well as doing what it does best; flattering the driver without feeling artificial.

In the grand scheme of things, the GT-R remains a bargain. The 'entry-level' Pure model is a fiver under £80,000 but the reality is, cars with equivalent performance and spec will cost over £100,000. It's worth investing an extra £2,000 to get the Recaro model with its superior seats. Current GT-R owners are keen on having the latest thing, and the improvements to the 2017 version are enough to warrant a return visit. It might be more of a GT than ever, but in truth, the GT-R has the performance to qualify as a supercar, getting as close to 200mph as makes no difference and a 0-62mph time nudging three seconds dead. It's not the youngest kid on the block, but it's still a special car to drive, and now more easy to live with.

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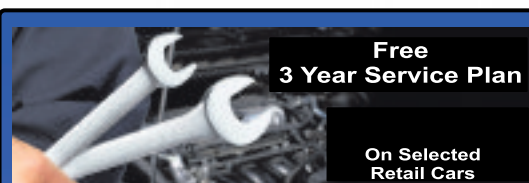
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Tony Hedge, Jenny Hughes, Stewart Dudwell, Fizz Rimmer, Alan Hughes, Brian Haynes, Mike Clendon



Young club member Josh Dams, aged 16



Long-standing member Jenny Hughes with young member Josh



Alan and Jenny Hughes met at the tennis club 60 years ago

Couples court in tennis club's own love match

A WOLVERHAMPTON tennis club boasts a unique history of match-making – and they are now serving up plans for the future to ensure their legacy continues.

Formed in 1924 in Finchfield, Linden Lea's history is remarkable. They've survived a World War, redevelopment plans giving them just 12 months to relocate and the tough act of constantly bleeding new members into the club.

The club is set to open its first tennis academy at its impressive hub in the centre of Compton Park campus.

Chairman Alan Hughes has been married to fellow club member Jenny for 54 years. They met at the club more than 60 years ago.

Together, along with up to a dozen other lasting marriages the pair have seen the club peak as not just a tennis club, but also one of the most reputable social meeting points in the area.

Glorious

But for now Alan, aged 76, and 81-year-old Jenny are thrilled at the plans put in place to ensure the club has a rich future to match its glorious past.

The club certainly has facilities to attract new members having been re-housed 12 months ago to a new base – alongside Wolves' training ground in Compton – which was unveiled by Wolves' chief executive Jez Moxey.

"It's been fantastic to move onto the new site with the brick-built clubhouse and three floodlit courts," said Alan.

"We're on the Compton complex next to Wolves' training base and there are two schools there, St Peter's Collegiate and St Edmund's.

"There is Wolverhampton Girls' High School just

SPORTING MEMORIES

By Lewis Cox

"We want more youngsters at the club. We hope the academy will help us with that and get more local kids involved."

down the road and also Wolverhampton Grammar School, with places like Smestow Academy also close.

"The Way Youth Zone in the city are also very keen to be involved.

"We want more youngsters at the club. At the moment we have about 60 senior members and 30 juniors.

"So we hope that the academy will help us with that and get more local kids involved."

Mike Clendon is chairman of the club, which boasts three men's teams competing in the South Staffs Tennis League, along with a women's team.

For their fresh academy unveiling, Hughes and Co are hoping that the brother and sister partnership of Dan and Sally Nicholson will prove a big attraction.

Sally arrives as official coach of the academy, while Dan – who coaches with Wombourne and Worfield tennis clubs, will also be helping out.

The club recently hosted a taster session open day for keen youngsters to come and practise their shots.

Alan continued: "We think there is tremendous potential for our club now.

"We have tried before to moderate success but there is real impetus with the new clubhouse and

facilities. Last time we were on older courts, rather caught up on a building site.

"Dan and Sally's help will hopefully really get the academy off the deck.

"We're hoping to have a great relationship with the schools and the youth zone. I know Dan has already been St Peter's to give some sessions."

Driving up interest has not always been a concern for Linden Lea. Hughes explained the secret to long-lasting 'love' – was purely that the club was the place to be.

"In those days we were the centre of junior activity in the area," he said. "We actually had to limit the age that people were able to join at 22. There was even a waiting list!

"It wasn't just tennis. We would go to dances, do swimming – all different social things."

They would regularly hold jumble sales, and visit Swancote Swimming Pool, stopping off for a refreshing trip to the Cider House on the way home.

Weddings

"As youngsters do when they go to social clubs and spend a lot of time in one place – the young men and women got together," he added.

"There have been lots of weddings, my own included, and all of the partnerships saw a lifetime.

"Some have died now and some moved away, but we have a handful who remain social members and we get together every month.

"Neville Tarratt is 90 now and last year he helped us open the new base, he even gave a speech.

"Roger and Monica Wilkes remain part of our social club and Peter and Joyce Wakeman are still interested in the wellbeing of the club."

While the past remains a fairytale story, Alan is insistent that Linden Lea's latest initiatives will provide a bright future. "It's very easy to think of the past," he said. "But we've got to look forward."



Linden Lea Tennis Club's new set up, next to Wolves training ground at Compton



Spectators watch the tennis from the sidelines as members take to the court for a game



New signing is ready to make debut

NEW Cradley signing Richard Andrews is the missing link in the team – and he wants to put that right sooner rather than later.

Andrews will make his debut for the Motor Market side in their home meeting with his former club Eastbourne at Monmore Green on Monday.

He started the season with the Eagles before suffering a broken scaphoid on the opening day of the season – and he's taken longer than expected to recover.

But he was back on a bike at Somerset last Friday and is hoping for some more practice before Monday night.

Heathens have been struggling since Jack Kingston stood aside in May due to increasing pressure away from the sport with work.

Andrews said: "They've been struggling for points in the middle of their team and hopefully I can put that right for them."

"My first meeting is definitely going to be a strange one but I want to get off to a positive start."

"I've been having a laugh with the Eastbourne fans on Facebook – they've been asking me to go easy on them but I'm a Cradley rider now and I want to get some race wins under my belt again."

"I think I'll enjoy myself at Cradley like I did at Eastbourne because they're two similar clubs."

"They're two of the bigger teams in the National League, they've got a great fan base and they're ambitious just like I am too."

Heathens will be without James Purchase who has suffered a shoulder injury and needs time on the sidelines.

It means an extended run for Bradley Andrews, who was dropped from the side when Layne Cupitt came in last week. Boss Will Pottinger said: "This is an opportunity for Brad."

Glassboys take on Shrewsbury in friendly next month

EXCITING winger Matt Dodd has become the latest player to commit to Stourbridge for next season.

Dodd, who joined the Glassboys in March 2015, was an influential figure last term with his pace on the right flank causing problems for opposing defenders but saw his season cut short by an injury sustained during the Easter Monday derby with Halesowen Town.

The Glassboys return for pre-season training on July 2 with boss Gary Hackett hoping to have wrapped up deals for three new players by then.

Stourbridge have added a further home friendly to their pre-season schedule. The Glassboys will host Shrewsbury Town at Amblecote on Monday, July 25 (7.45 pm). There are links between the two clubs stretching back years, most notably the transfers of strikers Chic Bates and Ray Haywood from Stourbridge to Shrewsbury in 1974. Manager Hackett is also a former Shrews player.

Stourbridge have announced the appointment of former defensive stalwart Nathan Bennett new assistant-manager of the under 18s.

Young Gloves fighters head for Europe



The squad with Lions Club sponsors. Picture: Richard Watkins

ONLY one day remains before young Gloves Karate heads off to the continent to take on the best Europe.

The fighters will represent England for the WKU in the European championships in Germany.

A club spokesman said this was an incredible achievement, adding the whole club was proud of the 12 squad members who have been successfully selected to represent England.

Their call-ups came as a result of many successful competition perfor-

Karate

mances in national events over the past 12 months.

The team, led by head instructor Sensei Justin Thomas, flies out tomorrow (Friday), and returns on Sunday.

The spokesman said: "Special thanks must go out to our sponsors, the Lions Club, for supplying our squad track-suits, ADI Treatments for our transport, and The Monday Night Club for our new karate suits."

Grounds for complaint at cancellation

CONTROVERSY surrounded the postponement of Halesowen's important league clash with Stratford on Saturday.

Officials were furious when the umpires arrived at the ground only to pull the plug – despite an encouraging forecast for the remainder of the afternoon.

And the decision proved to be even more questionable as all other games in and around the area went ahead – and in general across the league.

A Halesowen CC spokesman said: "Over the last two seasons the ECB and the Premier Leagues across the country have been encouraged to ensure cricket gets played and to make the best of things where weather is an issue."

"To this end all clubs and officials have signed up to the ECB's campaign known commonly as 'Get the Game On'."

"The purpose of the campaign is to ensure cricket gets played every weekend and as such players, ground staff, officials and club administrators are all well-versed in the edict."

Both captains appeared to be keen to play the game and Hales skipper Richard Brooker said: "It was an extremely frustrating afternoon for everyone as we were disappointed with the standard and manner of the ground assessment conducted by the umpires and accordingly will be taking the appropriate action with the league management."

The fourth team managed to play and moved up to second. Matt Slater took 5-23 to help restrict Hanley Castle to 214 all out. Halesowen edged home with two overs to spare, thanks to an unbeaten 83 from Ben Dunn.

On Saturday, the first team are at home to Tamworth (midday), the seconds go to Leamington (12.30), thirds head to Kidderminster (1pm) and fourths face Ross at home (1pm).

OSH rugby skipper faces South Africa

HUW Taylor, a former student at Old Swinford Hospital in Stourbridge, was part of the England Under-20s squad which cemented their place in the semi-finals of the World Rugby tournament this week.

England will now go on to face South Africa in the semi-final after beating Australia 17-13 to top pool B.

Head Coach Martin Haag said "South Africa are going to be physical and well-drilled. We'll keep the focus on ourselves and concentrate on ensuring there is a step up in our performance."

Worcester Warrior Huw from Claverley, joined OSH in 2007. Both he and elder brother Ed were captains of the OSH 1st XV.

★ ★ ★

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'NO FEAR' IN RING RETURN

TIPTON'S Lee Glover has no fear of failure as he attempts to rebuild his career starting with a fight at Walsall next month.

The resilient 29-year-old appears on a Town Hall bill for the first time since November 2014 when he steps through the ropes on July 9.

"The Tipton Slasher" has the words 'No Fear' written on his boxing shorts and that's appears to be his motto too.

Glover has twice been beaten for the English super featherweight title and was last stopped in two rounds by Leigh Wood for the Midlands feather crown.

Defeat against a yet-to-be-decided opponent at the Town Hall would likely finish his career completely.

He said: "I haven't boxed in the Black Country for a while, so I can't wait to be a part of a local show. I think the atmosphere will be buzzing."

Confident

"I always take a lot of fans, so it should be a great night. This fight is make or break for me. I have lost the last two, so if I lose again I may as well pack it in."

"When I win I will put myself back in the picture. I am feeling really confident, I have trained even harder than before, so I am ready."

"There is still a lot on the line in this fight but it doesn't feel as pressured because there isn't a belt at stake, so I can enjoy it a bit more."

"As long as I box to the best of my ability, I can't moan whatever the outcome is. I am fully ready to show up and give a good performance on the day."

Glover has drawn on a line under his defeat to Wood, which came in front of a TV audience as it was broadcast on Sky Sports.

He said: "I struggled to make the weight. I was trying to make nine stone and I was at that weight when I was 12!"

Halesowen's Lennox Clarke tops the Town Hall bill, with an opportunity to make it a dozen wins without reply. A whopping nine bouts will support the main event with former Midlands welterweight champion Rob Hunt, from Stafford, facing the 30th bout of his decade-long pro career.

Whiley serves up another title



Halesowen wheelchair tennis star Jordanne Whiley shows off her latest title

WHEELCHAIR tennis queen Jordanne Whiley continued her fine 2016 season by sealing a third women's singles title in Ile de Re.

The Halesowen star, who lost at the final four stage in the French Open at the beginning of the month, returned to success on the picturesque French island – where she also grabbed

runners-up in the doubles. The 24-year-old came out on top against Dutch world No.7 Diede de Groot 6-4, 6-2 on the final day of play.

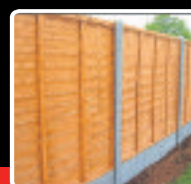
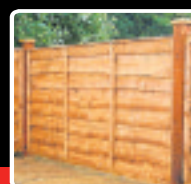
However, Whiley and partner Lucy Shuker were powerless to stop the top seeds in the doubles, as de Groot and Yui Kamiji were 6-4, 5-7, (11-9) victors.

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